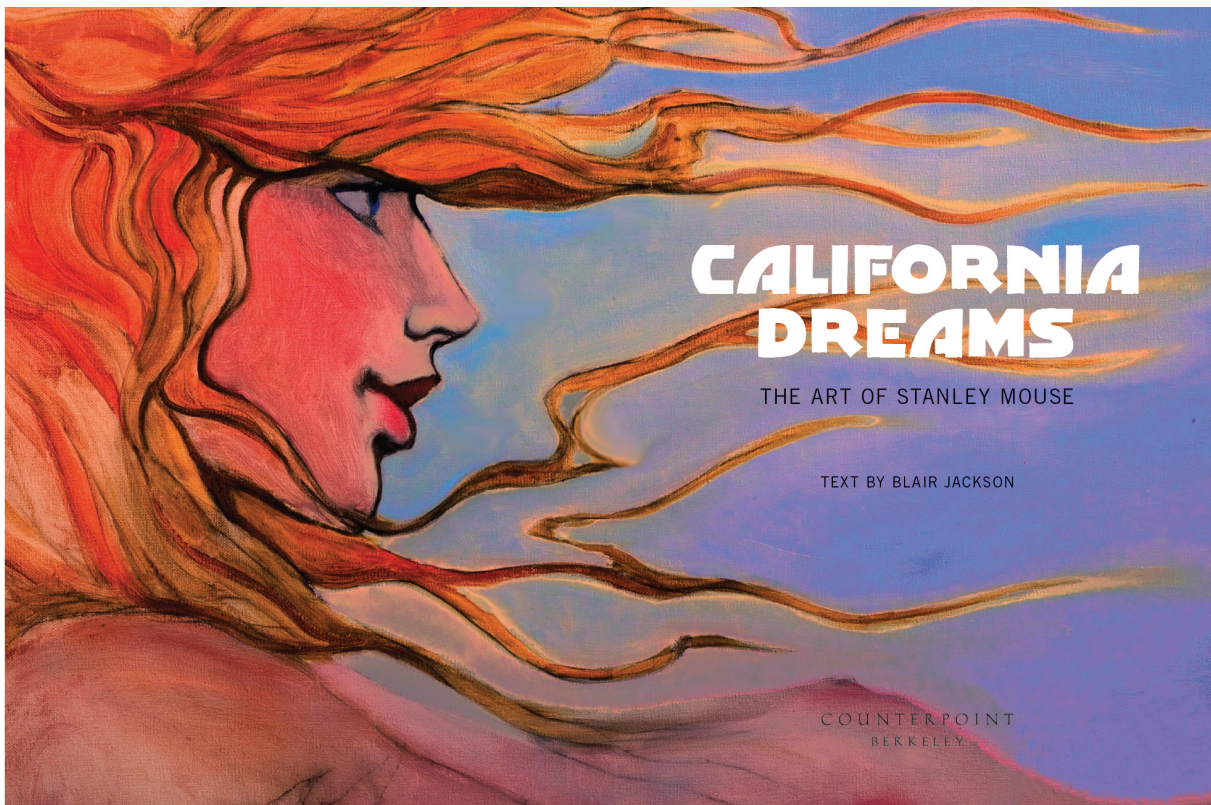


THE ART OF
**STANLEY
MOUSE**
CALIFORNIA DREAMS



PREFACE REFUSAL BY R. CRUMB





CALIFORNIA DREAMS

THE ART OF STANLEY MOUSE

TEXT BY BLAIR JACKSON

COUNTERPOINT
BERKELEY

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*First a light beaded curtain falls across.
Then a wooden door closes with a click.
Followed by an iron gate with bars
wrapped in barbed wire.
A loud clank of a thick metal door, with
rivets, sealing up everything that moves.
Then,
comes a breath of love . . .
The doors fall open.*

Stanley Mouse
2008



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EASY RIDER



Sky Fish 1998 oil on canvas

Preface Refusal

by R. Crumb...

Mouse:

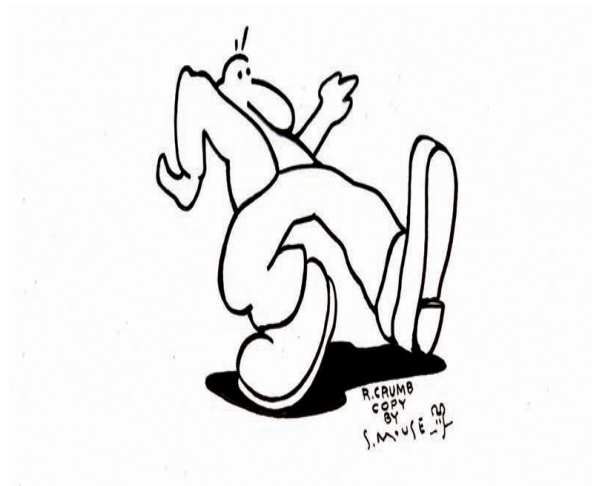
Received your note asking if I'd be up for writing a foreward or blurb for a new book on your life's work. I'm flattered that you ask but the truth is, I've been asked too many times to write forewords and blurbs. I just can't do it anymore. I've written so many of them! It takes time and thought to do it right. I don't—I can't—just glibly hack something out. I always spent a day on those things.

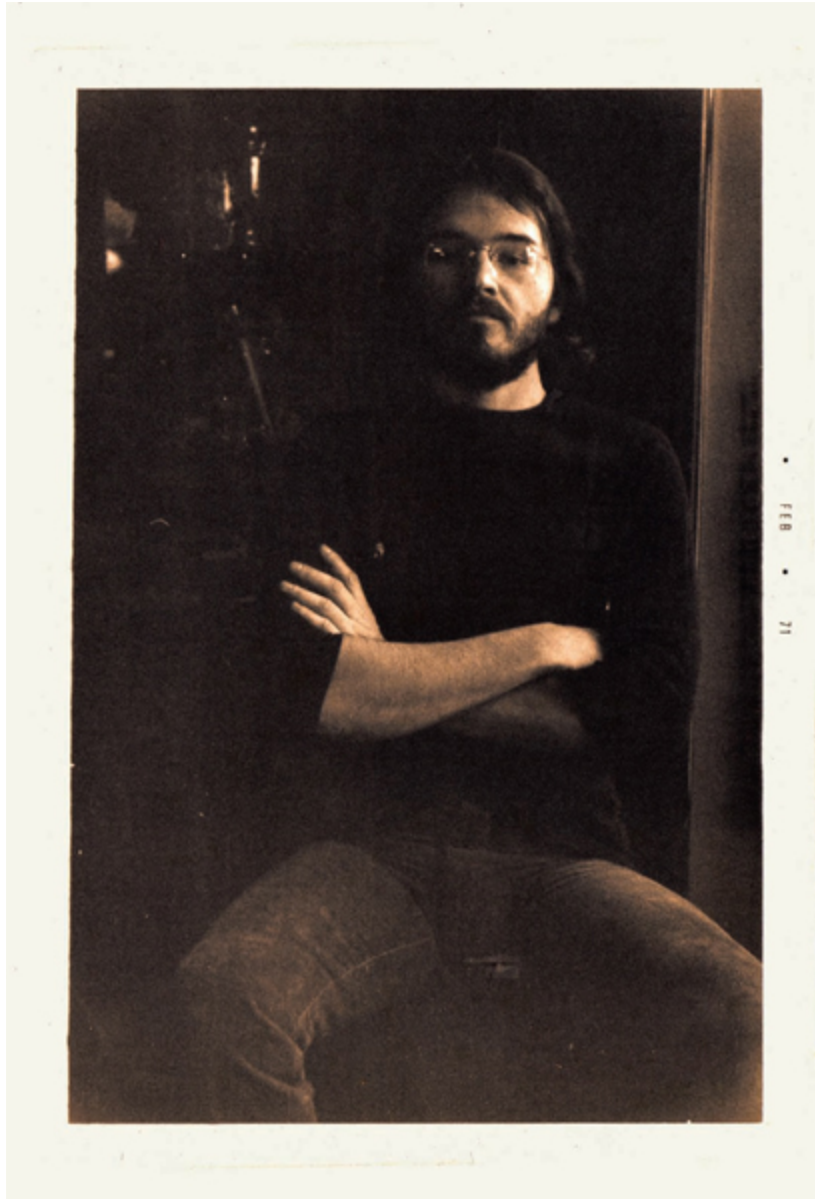
Not that I don't admire the work you did back in those crazy days of the sixties. Yours and Griffin's, particularly, I found very inspiring. Made me flee Cleveland to the mecca of San Francisco in January of '67. I could see right away that those posters were LSD-inspired. I'd had similar lettering and lay-out visions while tripping on LSD.

Funny, though, I didn't care much for the music advertised on those posters. I liked the posters better than the music. Amped-up psychedelic electric guitar noodlings never did anything for me.

Anyway, sorry, I can't do it anymore.

R. Crumb





Mouse, Boston 1971
photograph

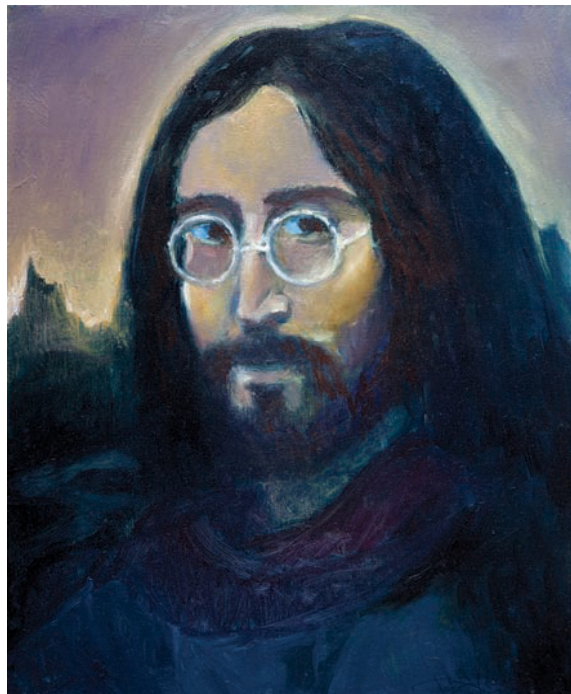
CALIFORNIA DREAMS

Mouse . . . About five minutes into the first of two long interview sessions, Stanley Mouse, who has been casually scrolling among literally thousands of scanned images of his art stored on his computer, stops, turns to me, and says with an impish smile: “Do you know how to do ‘art speak’?” I wasn’t familiar with the term, but I instantly knew what he meant. “You mean, pretentious art history criticism? Sure, I think I could pull that off.” OK, maybe I don’t have the requisite amount of German on the tip of my tongue. Mouse being Mouse, though, he wasn’t really suggesting I write about him in that style. It was just a notion that came into his head at some point when he was conceptualizing what he wants this book to be, one of dozens of both odd and on-point ideas he unspooled from his endlessly fertile mind and tossed out into the ether. Besides, there’s already been an impressive “art speak” essay (without the pretension) about Mouse—historian Walter Madeiros’s erudite and informative examination of Mouse’s link to art nouveau (among other topics) in the fine 1993 book *Freehand: The Art of Stanley Mouse*.

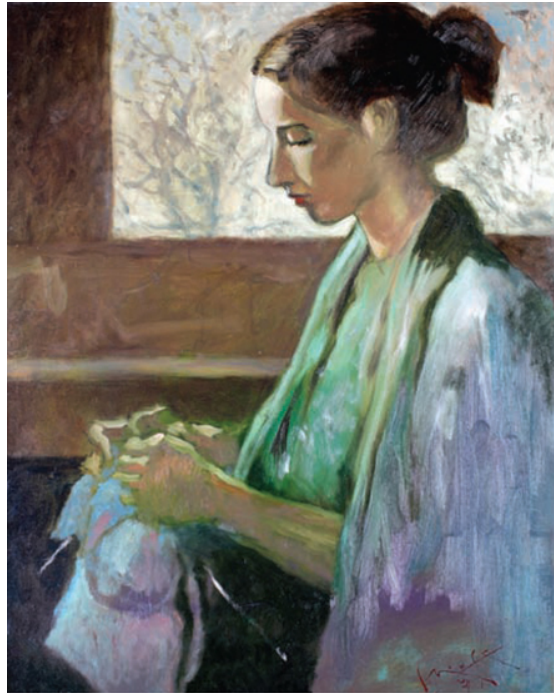
So, what is the proper way to look at Mouse’s art? After all, it spans six decades and countless different styles, from whimsical cartoons of monsters driving hot rods, to the imaginative and eclectic rock posters and album covers he’s best known for, to the fine landscape paintings and figurative works that have dominated his output in recent years. He’s created popular commissioned pieces for a staggering number of clients over time, but also never stopped making art for himself, following his muse wherever it leads him, constantly experimenting, trying new approaches, bringing fresh

perspectives to old ones; but always moving, always trying to get what's in his mind down in some form, whether it's in ink or paint or a computer.

Look at the studio where he works. Dubbed the “Mouseum,” the artist’s multi-room headquarters sits rather anonymously in the corner of a nondescript single-story warehouse business park in a semi-rural part of Sonoma County, less than an hour north of San Francisco. Mouse keeps a low enough profile that most of his neighbors in the unassuming complex don’t seem to know who he is or what he does—I learn this when I get lost among the similar-looking buildings trying to find his place on my first visit and no one can help me find it. Once inside, though, it’s like stepping into Mouse’s Wonderland. Each of the two large main rooms is covered from floor to ceiling with his art—the effect is almost like a super-colorful psychedelic version of those European art shows in the 18th and 19th centuries, where paintings of varying sizes would fill virtually every inch of wall space in a completely overwhelming profusion.



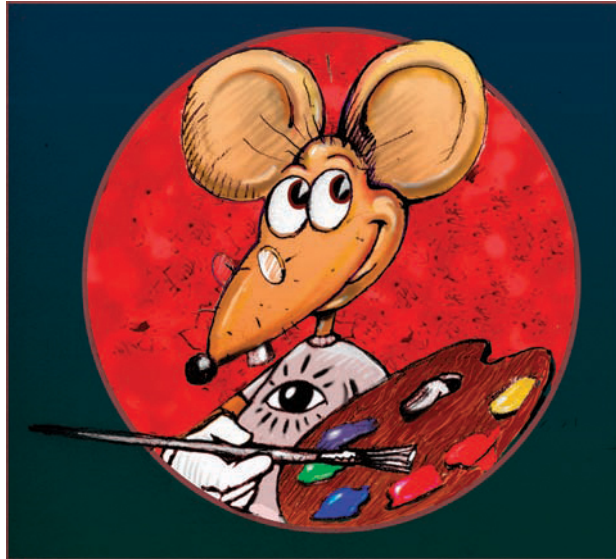
Johna Lisa 2011



The Knitter 2010

The art in Mouse's domain doesn't seem to be displayed with any specific intention in mind. Some of it is framed—my favorites are the ornate but inexpensive Mexican ones he's picked through the years—but most is not. There's nary a title card to be found (after all, it's *not* a museum) and the art is certainly not arranged by "period" or style. So a variation on one of the scarabs that appeared on the cover of a Journey album might sit on the wall next to a small piece of "weirdo art" depicting a slimy monster driving a souped-up dragster; a frantic running eyeball shares wall space with a graceful portrait of a beautiful young woman; what looks like a surreal, futuristic vision from a world that exists only in Mouse's imagination is inches away from a painting of a skeleton playing the guitar. Indeed, skulls and skeletons pop up everywhere—a reminder that Mouse is the best-known creator of art for and about the Grateful Dead, still a solid source of commissions for him. There are a number of playful and strange variations on the Mona Lisa—his "Picasso Lisa" and "Mona Lennon" are classic—and numerous other allusions to other artists and genres. The one that I can't get out of my head, though, is a simple impressionistic rendering of a woman knitting in profile, created in 2007. It's not at all what most people would associate with Stanley Mouse, but it's as much "him" as

anything else. You pigeon-hole his work at your peril, because his art covers such an immense range. He is both a product of his times and someone who has shaped ours in wonderful ways.



Mouse Palette 1990s



His given name is Stanley Miller, but he's been Mouse practically forever. In fact, even "Miller" is an adopted moniker. His grandparents on his father's side, who were born in Lithuania, had the last name "Mickus." Mouse's mother, born in Canada, had Ukrainian roots. His parents were both living in Detroit when they met and were married, but soon moved to southern California, where his father worked for a while as an artist on Walt Disney's first feature-length film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, released in 1937. Too perfect, right? The father of Stanley Mouse worked for the creator of Mickey Mouse on a legendary film? Alas, it was not quite so romantic.

"It was slave labor," Mouse says of his father's time toiling for Disney, "so he went on to other things in Fresno. My sister was born there in 1938; I was born in 1940. My father was a good artist, but he was a sign painter by trade. I guess he had been in the grocery business in Detroit somehow, and he actually became the manager of the first supermarket in Fresno; one of

the first supermarkets in the world—the A&P in Fresno—and he did all the signs. Then the war started, and he could either go into the Army and be a food supplier or go back to Detroit and work in the factories, the tank factories or whatever. So in 1942, when I was two, I ended up in Detroit.”

Post-war Detroit was something of a boomtown, thanks to the growth of the auto industry, which was fueled by the rise of the interstate highway system, the gradual move away from big cities to suburbs, and the baby boom. “Detroit was great back in the ’50s,” Mouse says. “It had this big black population that made it really fun; it had rhythm. I always thought it had the rhythm of a big black shiny Cadillac.” It also had serious racial problems—Detroit had been a northern outpost for the Ku Klux Klan in the ’20s, and in the ’40s and early ’50s, when Mouse was growing up, there was still rampant discrimination and de facto segregation all over the city.

Was everyone in Detroit into cars when he was growing up? Mouse says simply, “Well, it was *there*. It was in the air. I was so into cars! When I was 14, I made my parents buy me a car that didn’t run. All I really wanted to do was sit in the car and listen to the radio, especially the black radio stations; that’s where the cool music was. It was the early B.B. King stuff and John Lee Hooker and I was totally into that music. I’d sit in my car and play my music for hours.

“So, I was listening to black music all the time, in the car or at the hangout near my high school—they had a jukebox filled with black music. One day I was at my dad’s store and Bill Haley & the Comets came on the radio and it was like, ‘*Finally*, rock ’n’ roll!’ It was like the black music moved into the white world, and somebody other than Pat Boone.”

Mackenzie High School in west Detroit was one of the biggest public schools in the state in the ’50s, and “it was not very well integrated, though it was changing. There was heavy racial strife; it wasn’t pleasant at all. There was still a lot of weirdness going on. There were clumps of black people and clumps of white people looking at each other.

“I didn’t know any white, honky, cracker people. We were more like greasers. I had long, greasy hair, a ducktail, and I wore pointed shoes.”



Mouse in Hat early 1960s



Rolling Thunder mid 1990s
pencil sketch

He got his nickname—what became his *nom d'art*—in junior high, a couple of years before that “greaser” phase kicked in: “A kid called me ‘Mousehole Miller,’ for some reason. I said, ‘Drop the “hole” and I’ll take the “Mouse,”’ and I started signing everything ‘Mouse,’ and I was instantly famous in seventh grade.” It would be a few years, however, before the small running mouse character started turning up as part of his art signature.

Mouse had shown a knack for art at an early age—no doubt influenced by his dad’s proclivities in that area—and he spent untold hours drawing and doodling, including in his school textbooks, much to the displeasure of his teachers and the delight of his friends. He took his inspiration from everywhere: from comic books, ads in magazines, the spectacularly artistic detailing on hot rods and other cars, fine art he saw in books, science fiction art. The comic-format *Mad* magazine, which was arguably the most important source of political and social parody in the U.S. among teens and young adults from the early ’50s (when it started as an EC comics title) through the mid-’60s, certainly affected him as he was developing his skills (and his worldview). Later he even took his portfolio to the mag’s New York offices, hoping to secure some work.

At a certain point it became obvious that conventional school was not “a good fit” (as we euphemistically say today) for Mouse, so he took a different route, precipitated by a couple of events that happened one weekend when he was a sophomore at Mackenzie High. “One of the places we all hung out was called the Flying Saucer Grill, which was a cool name, but we called it The Box,” he relates. “One day, they painted the place all white and I think maybe they were going to change the name, or something. My dad had a car that had a ladder on top that he used for his sign business. So one Saturday, a friend of mine and I got the ladder out and painted ‘The Box’ *real* big on the building. I signed it ‘Mouse.’ The same weekend there was a school dance, and at the time me and some my friends had a little rock ’n’ roll band—although we were more into black music. We went to the school dance and drank a few beers, and when the group that was there played ‘Tea for Two’ and stuff like that, we couldn’t take it anymore. When the band took a break, we jumped up there and started rocking out! The whole place went crazy, dancing. We didn’t know the principal was there, and he chased us down the stairs and out the door and he managed to grab my coat, but I slipped out of it and kept going. The next Monday I got to school and got called in: ‘Did you paint that sign on The Box, and is this your coat?’ I said, ‘I quit,’ and he said, ‘You’re expelled!’ I was in tenth grade. I wanted out of there so bad.”

What did his parents think? “They always supported me. I enrolled in art school in downtown Detroit—at the Society of Arts and Crafts [now the College of Creative Studies]. It was very mixed—a lot of Korean War

veterans and mostly black—and it was fun. There was none of that stupid teenage racial tension.”

At the same time Mouse was excelling at life drawing in art school, he was becoming ever more immersed in the hot rod/custom car world, and soon found himself utilizing his art talent by pinstriping and painting designs on cars in his spare time—everything from art deco-ish striping to garish flames. “I’d paint somebody’s dashboard and they’d bring over a case of beer. The rumor got out there that I’d stripe your dashboard for a case of beer, but it was actually like \$5, which was about the price of a case of beer,” he says with a laugh.

It was his work painting on cars that led him to start using an airbrush. “I started spraying flames on cars—I really liked the motion and the freedom of that. Then I saw things in the hot rod books about people airbrushing T-shirts, so I started airbrushing T-shirts for the kids in the neighborhood—maybe a crazy hot rod with a monster coming out of it.”

Ah, yes, the great monster fad of the late ’50s and early ’60s. It was a time when monster and sci-fi movies were very popular. Folks who have studied such things note that in the post-Hiroshima, early atomic era there was tremendous insecurity about the power of A-bombs and H-bombs and the threat of imminent nuclear war with the Russians. The effects of atomic energy were barely understood, so an entire genre of speculative and fantasy films and books arose out of that national paranoia, and suddenly theaters were showing films about giant mutant ants and tarantulas—Rodan!—not to mention scientists who had been zapped by atomic rays and horribly transformed. Couple that with fears about the U.S.-Russia space race and man’s thirst for knowledge about what lies way out in deep space—murderous multi-eyed aliens, unspeakable blob creatures, angry robots bent on destruction!—and you get a youth culture obsessed with monsters.



Mouseville Dragstrip early 1960s

Crazy creatures were a gas to draw; the weirder the better. There were monster trading cards (like baseball cards) that were wildly successful, and the hot rod culture quickly adopted extreme monsters—eyes bulging, gross tongues flapping out of gaping mouths filled with crooked teeth—as the logical drivers of the fantastical, souped-up hot rods and roadsters that became its own art subgenre—“weirdo art.”

“Then I begged my parents to let me get a booth at the [Michigan] State Fair; it was really cool at the time [1958]. So my uncles went out there and built this big ‘Monsters’ booth for me between the shooting gallery and the knock-the-clown-into-the-water booth. It was like ‘*BAM! BAM! BAM!*’ on one side of me, and on the other side, the clown-jeering all day long. I’m painting shirts in between them. I used fluorescent paints and Day-Glo paints, and at night I’d have Day-Glo dreams. After ten days of doing this I

was so delirious that I'd start to write 'Mouse' and it would turn out 'Money.' I was this 18-year-old kid, making a ton of money.

"People love to art-direct," he continues. "Once they see that they can art-direct you, their mind goes crazy. Some of them were excruciatingly painful: 'There should be one more nut on that rear hubcap.' I did sweatshirts mostly and also screen-printed some T-shirts which were some of the first screen-printed T-shirts."

Somewhere in this period, Mouse returned to high school, "mostly because I missed the pretty girls," he claims, "and this time I picked a real 'Ivy League' high school—Cooley High. I was the school cartoonist and did drawings for the school newspaper." Still, Mouse's interests and direction clearly lay mostly outside of school.

After his State Fair experience, "I started going to the hot rod shows and drag racing meets and doing shirts there. There was this company that put on hot rod shows all over the East and Midwest—Promotions Incorporated—and I got the concession for doing that. So I went around for six years, traveling to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, New York City, all these places. I was doing Madison Square Garden when Kennedy was shot. I was feeling so bad and feeling so much emotion, but I still wanted to paint, but the Teamsters cut my [airbrush] hoses; they got mad at me."

It was in 1963, too, that Mouse got his first album cover commission, The Miracles' *Doin' Mickey's Monkey*. Mouse's cartoon illustration for the Smokey Robinson-led group depicted a gargantuan, extremely dumb-looking simian picking up a saxophonist from the midst of what looks to be a dance party—an unusual melding of Motown and monster art. "I did it on a pizza pie lid and got paid \$35 for it," the artist recalls. "I knew [Motown's] art director. He got \$75 for it."

During this period, when Mouse's business was exploding, "both my parents quit their jobs and went to work for me. My dad was my road manager. He'd pack the trucks up and keep it all together. He'd actually silkscreen the shirts. My mom did the mail order, which turned into a big deal. [The mail-order business was called Mouse Studios and, besides shirts, sold posters and decals.] It was a big fad and we were making lots of money. So it was kind of hard to move to San Francisco and sort of leave them in the lurch. But they were always resourceful, so I wasn't too worried."

But wait, we're not *quite* ready to make the life-changing jump to San Francisco. "After high school, I went back to art school, near Wayne State University, and that's where all the psychedelic action was starting to happen. We always had a pot of peyote brewing on the stove. We also had weed known as 'Early Gurley,' after Jim Gurley [soon to be lead guitarist for Big Brother & the Holding Company in SF]. He was known as the 'Arch-Fiend of the Universe.' We all hung out at this place around Wayne State known as the Laughing Academy, which was just somebody's pad. Another house we hung out at was called Terminal City. We also had [then-legal] Sandoz pharmaceutical acid."

Did psychedelics affect his mega-successful hot rod/monster art business? "Before that, I was painting so much on shirts that my hand was completely *tuned*—I was like an Olympic athlete! It was an experience, because after about the fifth shirt, the surface of the shirt would disappear. With airbrush, it felt like I was painting in infinite space, and I could draw almost anything. People would stick pictures of their cats in front of me, their sisters—'Here, paint this,' and I'd do it, so I got to be very virtuosic. That was my *real* art school, doing that. So by the time psychedelics hit, I was already pretty much a master at being able to draw, and psychedelics just exploded and magnified everything. So after a point, painting hot rod shirts became sort of like: 'God, there's gotta be something better to do with what I can do.'

"After a while, I got really disillusioned in art school. A lot of my friends had been to San Francisco and I got really good reviews about it from them. And I was *from* California, sort of, and dying to go back there. So sometime in 1965, about ten of us went in a bunch of cars and drove there. I still remember when we were driving over the Golden Gate Bridge for the first time, somebody said, 'Stanley, how long are you going to stay here?' and I looked at San Francisco and said, 'Forever!'"

The San Francisco Bay Area's own counterculture renaissance was just starting to blossom in the summer of 1965. Haight-Ashbury was still a mixed-race neighborhood mainly populated by working-class types and San Francisco State students, but seemed to be turning more bohemian by the day, as artists, musicians, and other creative types started moving into the area in greater numbers, attracted by the cheap rents and the proximity to beautiful Golden Gate Park. The first of the San Francisco bands into LSD

emerged—The Charlatans dressed in Victorian thrift store finery, grew their hair even longer than The Beatles (!) and played a spirited, if somewhat amateurish, melding of blues, country, and rock 'n' roll. But their scene that psychedelic summer wasn't in San Francisco, it was up at the Red Dog Saloon in Virginia City, Nevada, a gen-u-wine Old West town that didn't know what hit 'em when the long-haired acid crazies showed with their guns and guitars. Down on the Peninsula, south of San Francisco, The Warlocks—soon to morph into the Grateful Dead—were getting their start, and by summer Jefferson Airplane had debuted at a tiny hundred-seat club in SF called The Matrix. Close on their heels came the Great Society, featuring future counterculture goddess Grace Slick. So, there was definitely something in the air.



Detroit Institute of Arts poster 1970
pen and ink

Mouse and his girlfriend, Suzi, didn't settle in San Francisco when they arrived in the Bay Area in Stanley's Porsche coupe that summer. Rather, they scored a small pad in a miniature windmill in Berkeley, which had its own energetic and highly politicized scene. A year earlier, the campus at

UC Berkeley had given birth to the Free Speech Movement, and by '65 it was the de facto West Coast center of the burgeoning anti-Vietnam War movement. Country Joe & the Fish were the East Bay's great contribution to the emerging psychedelic music world. Well, that band and Owsley Stanley, aka "Bear," who got his start making acid in Berkeley and next door in Oakland.

Though Mouse says he wasn't that political himself, it was still a rush being in such a vibrant town, and it's fair to say that even the most apolitical and even anti-political folks who aligned with the counterculture in that era agreed that the Vietnam War was wrong, supported the civil rights movement, and disdained the dominant Madison Avenue/success-oriented straight world paradigm.

Unfortunately, Mouse didn't get to stay in California very long. "We hung out there for the summer, but then I got drafted so I had to go back to Detroit." He was quickly rejected by Uncle Sam—too strange, maybe—and, anxious to go back to the Bay Area, managed to get a drive-away—a car that needed to be delivered from Detroit to California. "They said, 'All we've got here is a hearse,' and I said, 'Perfect!' It was a brand-new Cadillac hearse. So we packed up our stuff and the dog, stuck a 'Make Love Not War' sticker on the back window, and drove it back to San Francisco without sleeping. We got there the first night of the Trips Festival [Jan. 21, 1966], but we were so exhausted we couldn't even go in. We parked in front and slept. After that we went to live on 17th Street [in SF]."

A lot had happened in San Francisco during that fall of 1965 while Mouse was back in Detroit. Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters put on a handful of wildly anarchic "Acid Tests"—public LSD parties, as LSD was legal until October '66—where the newly named Grateful Dead would sometimes play amidst the most chaotic and disorienting libertine revelries imaginable. Concurrently, a bunch of boho counterculture types who lived communally in a big house on Pine Street in SF and called themselves the Family Dog started throwing rock 'n' roll dances featuring some of the new bands that were sprouting up like (Day-Glo) weeds all over the city. What Kesey labeled the "Neon Renaissance" was suddenly in full swing, with the first phase culminating in the three-night Trips Festival at Longshoreman's Hall in San Francisco. It was the seminal event that announced that the counterculture had truly arrived and it was bigger and more colorful than

anyone had imagined. The Family Dog dances and the Trips Festival also laid the groundwork for the rise, in early 1966, of San Francisco's famous rock ballroom scene—first at the Fillmore Auditorium under the auspices of aspiring promoter Bill Graham and a Texas hippie refugee named Chet Helms, who had taken on the mantle of the original Family Dog members, who had scattered by then. When Helms and Graham had a falling out, Chet took his Family Dog across town to the Avalon Ballroom, and Bill ran the Fillmore himself.

“Bill brought a lot of big music acts to the city, but the real scene was happening at the Avalon ballroom,” Mouse says. “People came from all over the world to experience the Avalon. They danced up a storm, where hardly anyone danced at the Fillmore. At the Avalon they danced three days a week nonstop for about three years. And the back room at the Avalon was legendary.” He adds that they would often hang out with the bands that came through.

Mouse had no trouble finding kindred spirits in freewheeling San Francisco. Besides the large Detroit crew that had settled there—which by early '66 also included James Gurley in the nascent Big Brother & the Holding Company—the city was crawling with creative types exploring every facet of the arts, from music to dance to poetry to a pair of new forms that were suddenly all the rage: light shows and rock posters. The Charlatans' Mike Ferguson and George Hunter pioneered the San Francisco poster movement with their pen-and-ink advert for their band's summer '65 residency at the Red Dog Saloon. Later known as “The Seed,” the poster was a fanciful and funky mix of different styles of hand-rendered “type,” simple portrait renderings of the group, each surrounded by an ornate cameo-style border, and flowers placed symmetrically in each corner. It was like something out of the 19th century, yet an unmistakable product of the Acid Age. And it opened the floodgates for artists who followed.



This feels like the appropriate time to introduce Mouse's longtime art partner, Alton Kelley, into the story. Kelley's background had some similarities to Mouse's. A New Englander (born in Maine, raised in

Connecticut), he showed a passion for art as a kid, attended art school for a spell (in Philadelphia), and he *loved* cars and motorcycles from an early age; in fact, he'd pinstriped bikes and flamed hot rods as a hobby. Unlike Mouse, however, Kelley was also a grease-monkey—mechanically inclined and adept at fixing cars and bikes (and *planes*; he worked as a mechanic for Sikorsky Aircraft for a while). He moved to California around 1960, eventually settling in San Francisco.



Mouse and Kelley 1972

San Rafael, CA

Through mutual friends, Kelley got to know Mike Ferguson and George Hunter of the Charlatans, and he spent the “Red Dog Summer” with the group in Virginia City. That fall, along with Luria Castell, Jack Tolls, and Ellen Harmon, Kelley formed the Family Dog and helped put on the first psychedelic dances. He tapped into his artistic side by designing flyers for Family Dog events. Kelley was not a great draftsman yet (he became one over time), but he did have incredible design sense and was also, everyone agreed, a master collage-maker.

Kelley, who died in 2008, recalled meeting Mouse through James Gurley in the fall of '65, before Mouse headed back to Detroit to deal with his draft situation. But by that time he was already familiar with Mouse, the artist. As Kelley told Walter Madeiros, “[Mouse] and Ed ‘Big Daddy’ Roth turned on lots of kids across the country with their car and monster stuff, and I always loved Freddie Flypogger [the best-known character from Mouse’s hot rod/monster period].” Then, after Mouse moved to SF in early '66, “Kelley came over to fix my Porsche, because it was broken, and I’d heard he was a motorcycle mechanic who could also work on Porsches.” This time the two really sparked, and they started hanging out together. Both were endlessly creative, curious, funny, and looking for adventure.

The winter and spring of 1966 saw the first true flowering of the SF rock poster movement. At the center of the swirl was an artist and print shop co-owner named Wes Wilson, who got the gig from both Chet Helms and Bill Graham to create posters for their Fillmore and Avalon Ballroom dances. Most were two-color, hand-drawn works that emphasized the names of the bands in sensuous, undulating letters, occasionally accompanied by a simple image or two—black and white etchings/drawings in the public domain, unusual photographs, or even promo shots of the top-billed artist for that weekend’s shows. The seemingly dancing letters and the bold juxtaposition of unexpected colors made the posters a visual treat—as well as an effective advertising tool—and it wasn’t long before other talented artists started to emerge on the scene. For instance, nobody could make bright red and electric blue letters leap and vibrate the way Victor Moscoso did on many of his psychedelic posters.

When Wilson found the demands of creating two posters a week—one for Graham and one for Helms—too exhausting, he dropped the Avalon, which opened a spot for a new artist. Kelley, who was close to Helms and had been working as a de facto art director for the Avalon, convinced the promoter to try out his new friend Mouse, and in early June Mouse created his first Avalon poster, for a show by Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band and Oxford Circle. It was relatively straightforward, with a line drawing of a steer’s head (but with subtle buck teeth!) in a circle—a play on the Beefheart name, of course—and some nicely rendered but not particularly psychedelic writing above and below the image. (“FD 13” is the formal designation of the poster’s position in the chronological numbered series of

Family Dog posters. Likewise, Bill Graham shows are differentiated by “BG” and the poster number. Family Dog posters often had names, too, based on themes that Chet Helms would sometimes provide to the artists.)



Frankenstein handbill 1966



Zig-Zag t-shirt 1967

Mouse and Kelley’s art partnership began in earnest with the following week’s Avalon poster, for a dance featuring two local favorites, Big Brother & the Holding Company (with new singer Janis Joplin) and Quicksilver Messenger Service. Mouse already knew Big Brother/Janis well—they

noisily rehearsed in the long-vacated, horse-drawn-buggy-era firehouse on Henry Street in San Francisco Mouse was renting at the time. “I had my studio upstairs; Big Brother used to practice downstairs,” he recalls. “The night that Janis auditioned for the band [in early June ’66], the police knocked on my door and said they had reports of a woman screaming. I told them, ‘It’s just a singer auditioning for a rock band.’”

The poster Mouse and Kelley created for the show became one of their most famous: It looks exactly like a pack of Zig-Zag rolling papers, complete with logo and distinctive drawing of a contented, possibly Middle Eastern man puffing on . . . is that a cigarette or a joint? “We thought we’d get into a big copyright/trademark trouble with that, but Zig-Zag couldn’t legitimately advertise to potheads, so what they got out of the deal was like a million dollar ad campaign for free, so they kept their mouths shut. Now they’ve trademarked everything,” he adds with a chuckle. “In general, we tried to use images from dead people and public domain. We usually used stuff that was at least 100 years old.”

Though Mouse was by far the more skilled and accomplished artist of the duo in those early days, “Kelley had a really good conceptual mind and lots of great ideas, so we just started working together—him being like the layout guy and me being ‘the hand.’” They drew their inspiration from everywhere: from belle époque and art nouveau French posters, Native American art and old Edward Curtis photo images of Indians, iconic figures ranging from Smokey Bear to Gloria Swanson to Frankenstein to Edgar Allen Poe. The artists spent untold hours together combing through books at the San Francisco public library, digging and absorbing art from every era (Klimt! Escher! Mucha!) and culture, always conceptualizing, always looking for the perfect image—whether serious or absurd—that would make their posters sing (metaphorically) and maybe blow a few minds along the way.



Mouse and Jerry Garcia 1970
San Francisco

It was one of those library sessions that led to perhaps the most famous Mouse and Kelley poster of them all—the “skeleton and roses” image that dominates FD 26, for a pair of September ’66 Avalon dances headlined by the Grateful Dead. It came from a nineteenth century version of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* illustrated by an artist named Edmund Sullivan. “When we came across that image we said, ‘That’s got Grateful Dead written all over it!’” Mouse says. “I always tell people we Xeroxed it, but of course there weren’t Xerox machines then. Then I came across the actual piece—Kelley had cut it out! It’s was a bad thing to do, really bad,” he laughs. “So we took it and I colored it in and did the lettering around it, and it was spectacular.” Indeed it was, and it made up for the pair’s previous Avalon Dead poster (with Frankenstein on it), on which they had misspelled the group’s name: “GREATFUL.”

Mouse and Kelley had a remarkable run creating posters for the Family Dog throughout the summer and fall of ’66 and into the winter of ’67, but the same period also sees the further emergence of Victor Moscoso as a force in the poster world and the arrival of a prodigiously talented and imaginative artist from Southern California named Rick Griffin. Mouse and Griffin were familiar with each other from previous artistic incarnations—Mouse in the hot rod world and Griffin in the SoCal surf scene. Mouse explains that on a short trip to the L.A. area in that summer of ’65, “I went to a fair down in Huntington Beach or Costa Mesa. It had a Hawaiian motif

and I'd paint shirts there, and my girlfriend would pierce ears. Some kid walked up and said to me, 'Draw Murph the Surf on a shirt!' I said, 'What's that?' and he just jeered me. 'You don't know who Murph the Surf is?' [He was a popular character Griffin drew for *Surfer* magazine.] I said, 'Bring me a picture tomorrow and I'll paint a shirt.' So he brought me the picture and I painted Murph the Surf.



First 'Mouse House' 1966
Detroit



Pray for Surf 1963

"When we moved to San Francisco after that to the place on 17th Street, next door to me was an apartment building and Ida Griffin [Rick's wife]

was living there; she and Rick had broken up [temporarily]. Later, I guess Ida got hold of one of the posters we did and sent it to Rick, and Rick made a beeline up to San Francisco and joined in.” In a 1976 interview, Griffin noted, “I had known Mouse’s work for years . . . When I finally met him in San Francisco it was like, ‘Ah, we meet at last!’”

Despite the popularity of the posters—and they did become a sort of international calling card for the burgeoning San Francisco scene, not to mention being widely imitated all over the world—creating them was not a particularly lucrative way to make ends meet. Graham and Helms were notoriously penurious, though both were quick to understand the potential value of these legitimate works of popular art. And what started as small print runs of Fillmore and Avalon posters truly meant to advertise dances—tacked up on telephone poles and displayed in store windows—soon evolved into larger print runs and money-making distribution to “head shops” across the country, with little or none of that money going to the artists.

“Chet paid \$100 and Bill paid \$75 for a poster,” Mouse says. “My rent for the firehouse was \$100 a month and I was supporting a big scene there: There was a guy who did silkscreens downstairs and slept on a silkscreen table. There was always somebody sleeping over. After doing three or four posters for Bill, I asked him for some posters to send home to my mom, so he gave me a little stack of posters and I sent them to her and she immediately opened up a poster shop in Detroit, called the Mouse House. It went on to be one of the biggest head shops for 35 years. But because of that little stack of posters—there were probably around 20 of them—Bill would dock me \$25 every time I did a poster for him, to pay for those posters. That’s Bill Graham!

“But they both screwed us for the copyrights. Bill Graham took them right out front. He did promise 10 percent [of sales] to us, but it never happened. Later, someone found the paper that Bill wrote out [guaranteeing the percentage] but they quickly tore it up and the person who found it was fired.”

Having established a name for themselves through their Avalon work, Mouse and Kelley, working under the Mouse Studios moniker, also landed plenty of work outside of Helms and Graham’s modest patronage. They created posters for many other dances and events, and in early ’67 were

hired by Warner Bros. to design the cover for the Grateful Dead's eponymous debut album—Kelley created a collage out of various Herb Greene photos of the band and a few other elements, and Mouse did the lettering and ornamental filigree. Around the same time, they also put together a poster for the Dead's first fan club, The Golden Road (to Unlimited Devotion), named after a song on the album.

In July of '67, the Moore Gallery in San Francisco staged the first “serious” exhibit of rock posters, highlighting the works of the local artists who became known “the Big Five”: Mouse, Kelley, Moscoso, Wilson, and Griffin. Each of the five designed a special poster for the exhibit—Kelley's was a collage that included a photo of Grateful Dead singer/keyboardist Pigpen; Mouse's famously had the words “JOINT SHOW” written in letters made of marijuana “roaches” (lest anyone miss the double-entendre).



‘Joint Show’ poster 1967



Mouse outside PotCo 1967

“Later when I went to London in 1969, the artists there asked me, ‘How did you guys *do* that?’” Mouse says. “Because there was so much competition there, no one would ever think of working on a poster with someone else. But [in SF] we were all friends and occasionally we would work together. Griffin would work with Moscoso, and Griffin would work with Kelley; it was really cool. Each time somebody would bring out a poster we’d all say, ‘Wow, he one-upped me! I gotta one-up him!’ But it was always a totally positive creative energy.”

Talk to just about anybody who was part of the San Francisco counterculture from 1965 to 1967 and they’ll tell you that the summer and fall of ’66 was the golden time—before the massive crowds of seekers and wayward kids descended on Haight-Ashbury for the fabled Summer of Love in ’67. Mouse and Kelley were busy as could be through it all, not just doing their artwork but also running a sort of crafts/head shop on Haight Street called the Pacific Ocean Trading Company (or PotCo). “There were all these people around us who made beaded necklaces and these other crafts—there was an explosion of craft work, so we got to sell all that stuff,” Mouse says. “In my studio at the time, I was silkscreening posters and T-shirts, we’d sell them there, too—Zig-Zag, Pigpen, Family Dog posters, Western Front posters. And sometimes we’d lock the doors and put out seats and just watch the parade go by on Haight Street. People would be

walking by with bongos and torches, everything imaginable. It was completely crazy most of the time, and it also got to be too big, of course.

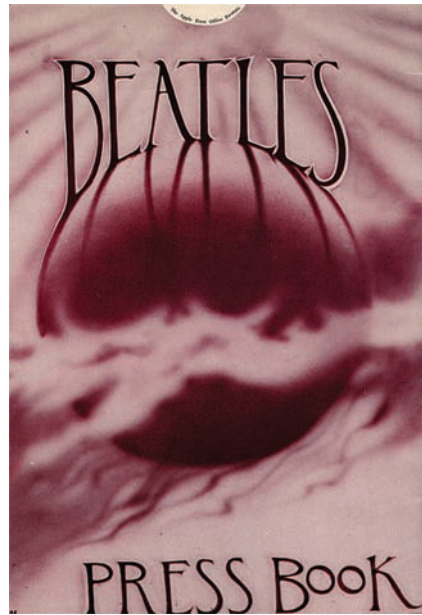
“When the media picked up on the scene and it became, ‘Come to San Francisco with flowers in your hair,’ the throngs and masses showed up—the runaways and strung-out druggies and whatever. In the beginning, it had been poets and musicians and writers and artists, with people having a good time and loving each other and being nice to each other. Then, when the masses came, they were just feeding off the scene that had been established by all these creative people, but not really giving anything back, and actually kind of bringing it down. Pretty soon all the bad drugs moved in, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were killed and there was all this police and racial tension. It got pretty bad.”

That’s a big reason why Mouse and so many artists and musicians left San Francisco during the year-plus following the Summer of Love. “When the scene folded,” he remembers, “Kelley had this cool little Victorian flat on Sutter Street, and he gave me the front room, and I had almost no bills, free rent, and I was really into macrobiotics, so I was living on veggies and brown rice and I’d eat at the Good Karma Café on 18th Street. I got all these books on Eastern mysticism and I kept reading and reading, and I started astral traveling—it was really cool. I realized I was having way more fun doing that than taking psychedelics. And it lasted; it didn’t just go away the next day.

“So one day I’m sitting there in the lotus position—I called it my ‘launching pad.’ I’d roll out of bed onto the launching pad and I’d start astral traveling. The phone rings and I answer it, and it’s Eric Clapton. ‘Hey, Stanley, you want to come to London and paint flames on my Rolls Royce?’ And I hear chuckling in the background, and it’s Bob Seidemann [the noted SF photographer and a good friend of Mouse’s]; he was in London at the time and he had put Clapton up to it.”

But it wasn’t a joke, and Mouse was looking to get out of San Francisco, so first he headed back to Detroit and worked a booth at the State Fair, as he had for many years, even after moving west, “painting in Day-Glo colors, doing monsters” (or whatever was requested), and digging Stevie Wonder and The Temptations in the Motown Revue that also played the fair. He scraped together enough money to fly to London, but by that time Clapton had recently crashed his Rolls Royce into the Iranian embassy

(sorry, no “flaming” will be required!) and had just escaped a bust attempt by the local constabulary. The guitarist fled to the house of his manager, Robert Stigwood, and the night Mouse arrived, there was a big party and, in addition to Clapton and other local luminaries, “George Harrison was there and he sang all these ditties until three in the morning. I walked into this and I thought, ‘Man, the London scene is really cool!’ In the morning, though, I had to go out and get a hotel, so I went from being in this mansion with the highest echelon of the scene, to a funky hotel in the East End.”



Beatles Press Book 1969

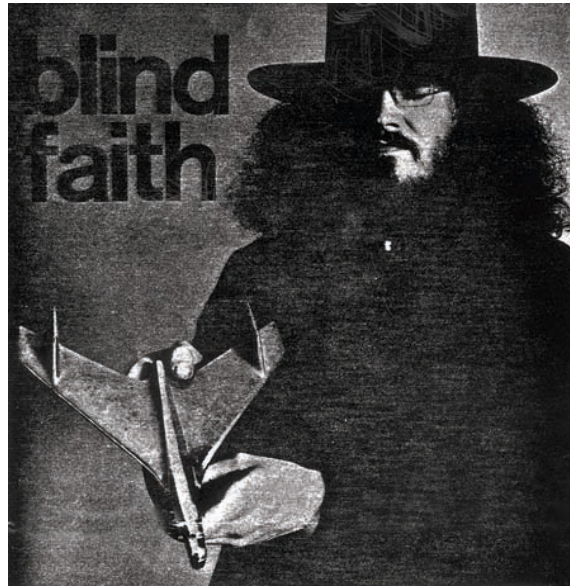


John Lennon, Yoko Ono, Mouse 1969
Amsterdam

Mouse didn't produce a tremendous amount of art in London—the most high-profile pieces were his contribution to *The Beatles Illustrated Lyrics* book, for the Indian-influenced George Harrison song “The Inner Light,” and the cover of The Beatles’ press book—but he did enjoy the vitality of the city and, not surprisingly, “I went to the British Museum a lot and to art galleries.” And there was this notable adventure: “In my house there was a band called White Trash that lived there and recorded for Apple [The Beatles’ record label]. They were going to go on a TV show in Amsterdam, so I went with them. And they said, ‘Let’s go visit John and Yoko at their Bed-in for Peace!’ So we went up there; I have a photo of me there. Yoko made me a bowl of brown rice.”

This is around the time Bob Seidemann was working on the album cover for Blind Faith, a short-lived British super-group featuring Clapton, Ginger Baker, and Steve Winwood. Originally, the photographer had a picture of Mouse with a big hat and long hair and the words “Blind Faith.” The cover was approved by the band, but soon Seidemann found an under-aged girl to pose topless for the cover, and the picture of Mouse was replaced by a photo of the girl. When the album came out, it was immediately banned and replaced once more with a Seidemann photo of the

group and lettering by Mouse. Later, the ban on the photo of young girl was lifted because of its unquestionable status as art.



Blind Faith album original concept 1969

Photo by Bob Seidemann



Blind Faith album art 1969

Photo by Bob Seidemann

After a year in bustling London, with its “very competitive art scene,” Mouse returned to the U.S. “I was California dreaming, and Woodstock was

in sight. My parents sent me \$300 to get home, but the bank changed it wrong and I ended up with \$1300 when they transferred the money. So I took an ocean liner back, the S.S. France, and ended up in New York City. Then Kelley and I stayed in Boston for six months. He was living in Roxbury with his girlfriend, and we worked on an album cover for Jimi Hendrix, but then Jimi died. They finally released the album years later, but without our cover.” The Mouse/Kelley cover for Hendrix had depicted a scarab beetle: “It sat around for a while and we made T-shirts of it. Then it finally morphed into the beetle on the Journey covers.”

By the dawn of the '70s, after triumphantly returning to Detroit for his one-man show, “The Graphic Works Of Stanley Mouse,” at The Detroit Institute Of The Arts, Mouse was back in San Francisco, living in a redwood mansion at the corner of Market and Castro streets with a popular counterculture comedy team, the Congress of Wonders. The first commission Mouse got in 1970 was to design a cover for the Grateful Dead’s new album, *Workingman’s Dead*, which found the fiery psychedelic pioneers now exploring folk and country music textures in their inimitable way. The cover he created was a stunning change of pace for the band—a distant, slightly fuzzy, black and white photo of the group (and lyricist Robert Hunter), dressed in workingman’s duds, hanging out, seemingly not relating to each other, on a non-descript street corner. It looked like it could have been taken in almost any decade in the 20th century.



Workingman’s Mole 1970

“Oh, God, they were pissed off,” Mouse says with a laugh, recalling the photo session. “It was 102 degrees and they had these heavy coats on. They did *not* want to be there. But that’s what made it cool—you can *feel* them being pissed off in the photo. The lens on my Leica M3 is collapsible and you pull it out, twist it, and it clicks [into place]. That day I pulled it out but I didn’t click it, so all the photos were blurry. But it gave it the atmosphere.

“Also, in the original version [of the cover], I drew a mole in there—a star-nosed mole right there along with the smokestacks. I got a big kick out of it, my friends who were helping me just laughed and laughed and laughed, but [the band and record company] made me take it out. Now, people order [prints of] it with or without the mole.”

The back cover of the album was dominated by striking individual portraits of the band members based on photos Mouse took of each out on the porch off the top floor of the Congress of Wonders house. “I took a photograph and then projected it, traced it down with a pencil, and then took an airbrush and freehanded the drawing.” The results were spare and folksy, just like the album.

A few months later, Mouse and Kelley collaborated on the stunning cover of the Dead’s *American Beauty* album—Kelley was responsible for the trippy yet somehow rustic lettering which at once read “AMERICAN BEAUTY” and “AMERICAN REALITY,” and Mouse painted the central rose. The following year, they altered and spiffed up the skeleton and roses image from the famous 1966 Avalon poster to make the fold-out cover of a double live album called *Grateful Dead*, but popularly known in Deadhead circles as “Skull and Roses.” The striking image of the skull wreathed in roses also became the Dead’s official logo around this time, too. Mouse and Kelley created the first album cover for the Grateful Dead’s offshoot country band, the New Riders of the Purple Sage, released in 1971. (That image, originally drawn by Michael Ferguson, also became the NRPS logo.)

Nineteen seventy-two saw the duo collaborating on a pair of pieces for the Dead’s live *Europe ’72* triple album—the now-iconic “Ice Cream Kid” image of a goofy guy crushing an ice cream cone into his forehead, and the “Rainbow Foot,” which depicted a giant R. Crumb-esque foot in a well-worn shoe striding under a rainbow, ready to travel the world (or at least

Europe). Both were based on small paintings Mouse made, which he and Kelley then airbrushed into larger versions.

That same year, “Kelley and I got together in Marin and started a T-shirt company, the Monster Company. Kelley and I wanted to do four-color dot-pattern T-shirts, but everyone said you couldn’t do it. So we actually went out and made the screens and took them over to Rip-Off Press [publishers of Zap Comix and other publications]. They had a four-color machine and they printed it and it came out pretty good. So we went out and got a machine like that and set it up in San Rafael and developed the four-color T-shirt process. We went and borrowed five hundred dollars from the Grateful Dead to start our T-shirt company, and then we paid them right back. We started with ‘Ice Cream Kid’ and ‘Rainbow Foot.’ We were doing really well at it—Kelley and I, and especially Robert Dries, developed the four-color process into a fine art, but at some point [a few years down the line] Bill Graham, who owned the Winterland T-shirt company—sent in a spy and stole the process from us: He paid somebody to come work for us, or paid somebody who was working for us, to tell them about it. And they just killed our business. They did it bigger and cheaper.”

Still, the Monster Company was quite a successful operation for a while. It quickly expanded its repertoire of images to include a few hot rods and roadsters, a winged eyeball, and various other cool non-Grateful Dead designs from Mouse and Kelley, and also other artists such as Pat Ryan, Crazy Arab, et al. Once the mail order business was well established, Mouse rented a building in San Rafael for a studio. It had many rooms in it that they rented out to other artists, as well. “We called it the Concrete Foundation of Fine Arts,” Mouse says with a smile. “It was quite a scene for a while.”



Closing of Winterland 1978



Original Blue Winterland Rose 1978
airbrush

Mouse and Kelley did some of their finest work there, together and separately, in the mid and late '70s, including several album covers such as the Dead's *From the Mars Hotel* (1974) and *Terrapin Station* (1977), Dead lyricist Robert Hunter's *Tiger Rose* (1976), several albums by the popular Bay Area band Journey between 1977 and 1981, Jerry Garcia's *Cats Under the Stars* (1978, by Mouse alone), and one of their most popular pieces, Steve Miller's 1976 *Book of Dreams*, depicting Pegasus with bright multicolored wings.

Of that last image, Mouse says, “Our T-shirt business was floundering, so we did this beautiful flying horse, thinking maybe it could save our T-shirt company. It was sitting there in our studio, and we weren’t there and Steve Miller walked in looking for an album cover. Somebody in the room said, ‘How about that?’ and he said ‘Perfect!’ So that became his album cover. Then Journey saw that and then *they* wanted something.”

Bill Graham’s Winterland Productions tapped Mouse and Kelley to airbrush sleek, modern posters for big tours by Paul McCartney’s band, Wings (1976), and the Rolling Stones (1977), and they also created a spectacular winged heart image (surrounded by psychedelic lettering) for posters advertising the film *More American Graffiti*. Mouse designed the cover of the program for the Dead’s historic performances at the Great Pyramids in Egypt in September ’78, while Kelley did a painting that became a commemorative poster. They collaborated on the famous “Blue Rose” poster for the Grateful Dead’s New Year’s Eve 1978 concert—the final show in the old but soulful Winterland arena.

By this time, Mouse increasingly felt like he “wanted more independent self-expression” apart from Kelley, and he was also dissatisfied with what he viewed as a toxic drug environment that had developed among some of the artists in the San Rafael building, “so one day I just said, ‘I’m moving!’ I wanted to go to Petaluma [in northern Marin County], get out of there, escape the drug scene. They said, ‘You can’t do that,’ because I was the landlord; I was the guy collecting the money. When they couldn’t pay the rent I paid it for them. I was their safety blanket. But I *did* leave, and I moved to Petaluma and it was *wonderful*. I started doing my own thing and I met a really beautiful woman named Marli, and we ended up having two children together.

“I’d been going down to Santa Fe to visit a friend and it was a really great art scene there, so after my daughter Oceana Rose was born, we moved there and I tried making it down there without anyone knowing I was a Grateful Dead artist. I had an art show and nobody showed up! Then word got out who I was, and the Grateful Dead connection, and the newspaper did an article, and then suddenly the whole place was swamped with people. I called it ‘Escape from the Dead,’ but it didn’t work,” he laughs. “But I did take up oil painting in Santa Fe. I found my favorite artist there and I asked him how to oil paint, and he said, ‘Oh, it’s easy. You just

mush the paint around,’ and then he left. He was right, so I proceeded to learn how the paint mushes, and I started doing landscapes. I even did a landscape on Georgia O’Keefe’s land.”

Far from just mushing paint around, Mouse’s landscapes displayed a remarkable feel for color, texture, and light, and also offered him a freedom that was clearly liberating. The change in setting and media also opened the door to Mouse’s interest in figurative painting, which has been an important area of artistic growth for him ever since.

“We stayed in Santa Fe two years [1983–84], and I had a place called the Running Mouse gallery,” he says. “I was still doing graphic work and things for Journey, and making royalties off Journey T-shirts. Then we moved to Lake Tahoe, near Tahoe City, and I did a lot of landscapes there and figurative paintings.”

Though it may have seemed that Mouse’s turn to figurative work was a new development, he notes, “I’ve always done that. My favorite thing in art school was figure drawing; I always excelled in that. But in Santa Fe, there were always a lot of figure-drawing classes.” Indeed, go back to some of the ballroom posters he drew in the late ’60s, and it’s easy to see his love of and fascination with the human form, particularly women.

His modern figurative pieces often feature long-haired women who look like they might have just stepped out of a Grateful Dead concert—or an art nouveau poster by Mucha. (That’s one reason Mucha seemed so relevant in the late ’60s; the women looked similar.) Mouse says that a lot of his models were/are Deadheads, but the way he paints them obviously puts them in a very different visual and emotional context. His figurative paintings tend to be serious, contemplative, and in more muted tones than you might expect from an artist whose best-known works are bursting with color and, in many cases, laced with subtle (or obvious) humor.

“I’ve always made most of my money from rock ’n’ roll,” Mouse says without a trace of disappointment. “I know a lot of people think, ‘Oh, he’s just a cartoonist,’ or ‘He’s just the psychedelic poster guy.’ ‘He’s not really a painter.’ Well, maybe in a hundred years people will say, ‘Oh, he could paint, too.’” He also notes, “As soon as the first Mac computer came out, I was all over that, and in the late ’80s, I proceeded to delve into the computer graphic possibilities of Photoshop—the very opposite direction of the move into classical oil painting.

“When I was younger, I was always kind of mystified by the art in the museum. I’d see the Rembrandts and some of the great art and I really wanted to be able to do that. Now that I’m finally approaching the ability to do that, no one cares!” he laughs. “Paintings were much more important in previous times because they were the only way that history and people and places were depicted. So it had a different function. There was no television or movies—those things have replaced art.”

Not entirely, of course, as Mouse’s prodigious and varied output attests. He’s always going to be associated with the Grateful Dead—in addition to creating a body of work related to them through posters and album art, he’s also designed covers for a number of books about the band, including Sandy Troy’s *One More Saturday Night*, Jerilyn Brandelius’s *Grateful Dead Family Album*, Rock Scully’s *Living with the Dead*, and the massive coffee table volume *Grateful Dead: The Illustrated Trip*. He also created a poster for the Grateful Dead Archive at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Skeletons find their way into many of his pieces *not* related to the Dead, too—mortality has long been a favorite theme. Fallen rock stars such as Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin turn up occasionally in his work, and he does revisit and rework his classic images in new ways, whether it’s a subtle variation on the skeleton and roses, the *Workingman’s Dead* portraits, the Journey scarab, or, going even further back, wild-eyed Freddy Flypogger.



LIFE Magazine photo 1967

But mostly, Mouse is looking forward. He still regularly turns out imaginative posters for concerts and other events, including, it should be noted, many benefits—Mouse has always been extremely generous with his time and talent. The rock poster has made something of a comeback in the past decade, particularly in the so-called “jamband” scene spawned by groups influenced by the Grateful Dead’s open and freewheeling aesthetic. It’s not at all uncommon these days to find spectacular limited-edition gig or tour posters on sale at the “merch” booth at various bands’ shows. The

Fillmore in San Francisco continues to give out commemorative posters at the end of many shows there. Then there's Roger McNamee, a technology investor who fronts a Bay Area jam band called Moonalice and has proven to be a patron/angel for many modern poster artists, Mouse included. Moonalice commissions a poster for nearly every show the group plays, more than 750 from 24 artists as of October 2014.

It's been the freedom to follow his eclectic whims wherever they lead him, and to explore the depths of his creatively restless soul, that has kept Mouse's studio humming for more than five decades now, through countless changes in styles, tools, and media. These days, too, he is being helped by his daughters, Rose and Sarah, and sometimes also works with his son Yuri, a talented poster artist himself, and with Yuri's mother, Kay, whom Mouse met in art school in Detroit, many moons ago. So the circle is unbroken. One thing that's clear is he'll never stop. And he'll never lose that twinkle in his eye. You get the sense that even after all he's seen and been a part of, he's probably not tremendously different than the precocious kid who drew hot rods and monsters for kicks a lifetime ago. Hell, he *still* does that. Maybe he'll pinstripe my Honda Accord for a six-pack.



Get Bent 1994
oil on board



Autorama poster 1962

HOT RODS & MONSTERS

Growing up in Detroit in the late 1940s and '50s, Mouse was in the right place at the right time to get swept up in the world of hot rods and custom cars. Los Angeles might have been a little more car-obsessed, with its ever-expanding urban sprawl and year-round good weather, but Detroit was still Motor City!

The hot rod/custom car craze dates back at least to the Great Depression, when high unemployment and widespread poverty led many people to hold onto their old cars longer than they ordinarily would, and others to scour junk yards for broken-down clunkers that could be repaired and put back out on the streets. Along the way, young folks who understood and knew how to work on engines began to figure out ways to improve the performance of these cars, making them faster and more powerful; much better for racing, for one thing. To make the cars lighter and more aerodynamic, this new wave of car enthusiasts would sometimes eliminate fenders, running boards and other parts deemed unnecessary. There were aesthetic considerations, too. Custom paint jobs and detailing eventually became an important part of the scene, and as engines got bigger, the hoods came off of some cars, all the better to show off that rumbling, growling *beast* of a V8. Although there were organized races around the country—especially in L.A.—it was still largely a grassroots movement of young male car enthusiasts who hung out together, shared their wisdom with each other, and delighted at putting a little scare into the status quo—think of all those movies from the '50s that involved tough-looking juvenile delinquents racing souped-up roadsters (or—*shudder*—the family sedan),

literally on the road to ruin. They corrupted the “good girls” and disgraced their upstanding parents. What’s the bad part?

In the late '40s, L.A. hosted the first major exhibition of hot rods, and around that time *Hot Rod* became the first national magazine to cater to that crowd. Many would follow. And though we laymen have a tendency to lump all the different populist car customization trends under the “hot rod” rubric, there were many off-shoots through the years that had both unique and overlapping audiences, including dragsters, customs and street rods, to name a few. As hot rod mania took off, Mouse hired staff artists Richard Ash and Ron Bizer to keep up with the demand for his airbrushed t-shirts.

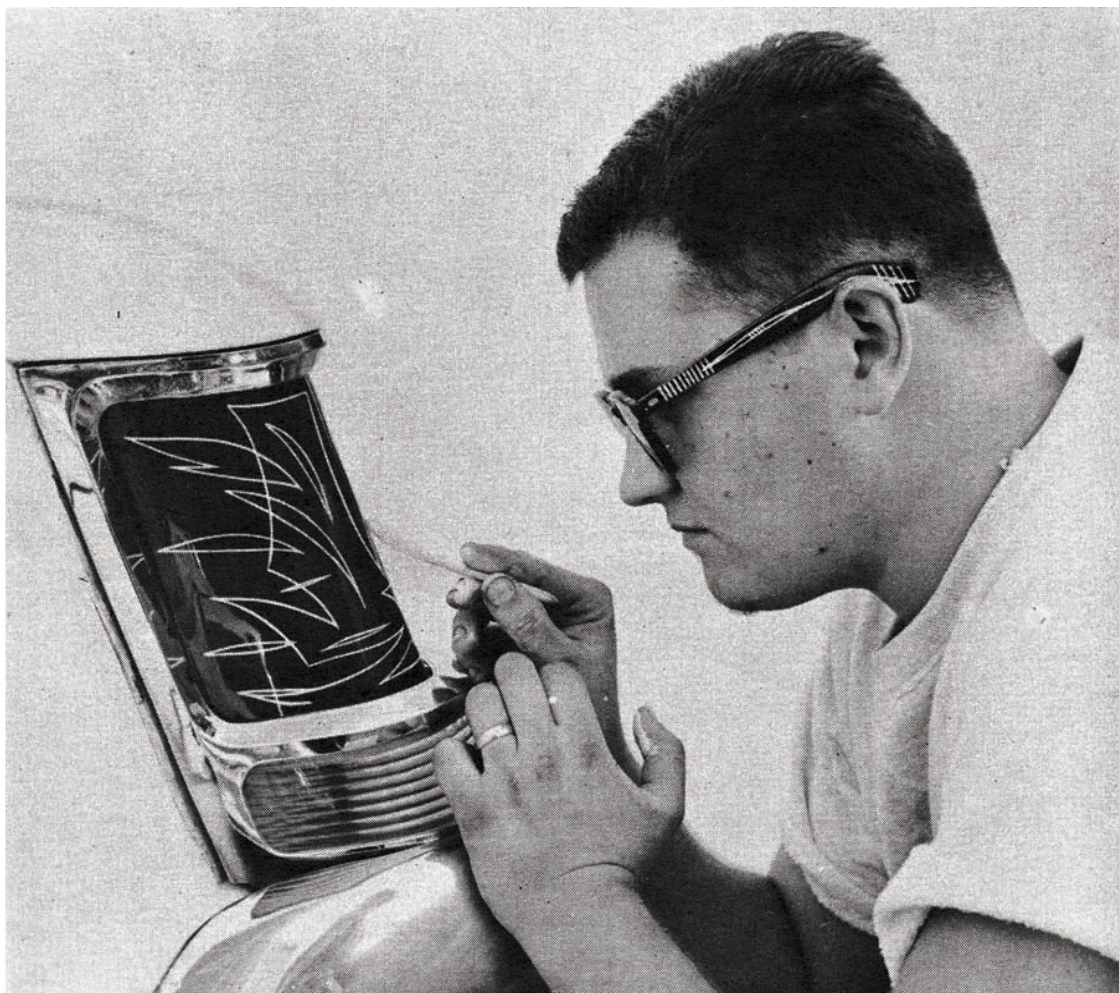


Mouse in '34 Ford 1967
Lagunitas, CA

Mouse owned many different cars with varying levels of prestige attached to them, beginning in his teenage years—his “first functioning one” as he puts it was a funky '48 Ford, but years later he wowed his classmates by owning a '62 Corvette. And what was his *coolest* car? Mouse doesn’t hesitate: “Actually it wasn’t a hot rod—it was a stock 1937 Ford. It was so cool! I bought it at a hot rod show where I was airbrushing shirts, in Houston, Texas, in 1962.

“I’d been doing [hot rod] art for a while and when I was in Houston there this guy came up to me and said, ‘Hey can you design me a logo?’ I went over to his house and designed him a logo and he was really happy. Then, years later, the guy calls me and says, ‘I want to take you out to lunch.’ I was living in Lake Tahoe at the time. So I meet him at the restaurant and it’s [ZZ Top’s] Billy Gibbons! He tells me he wanted to take me out to lunch for doing his first graphics!

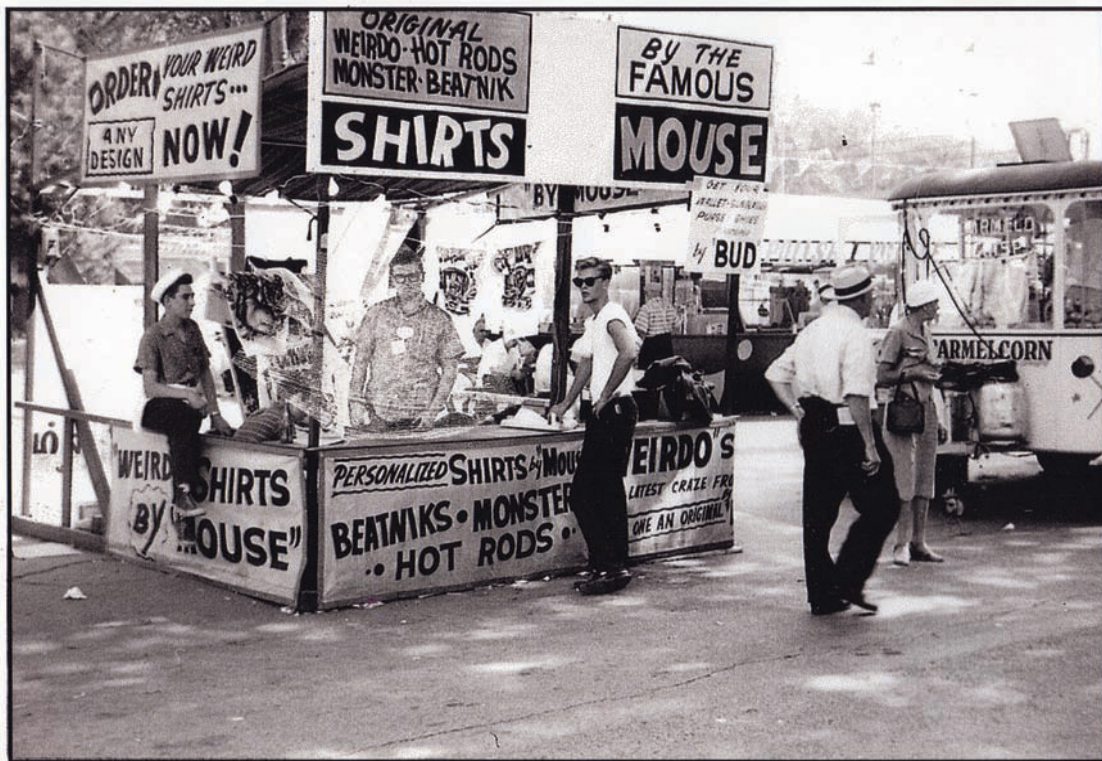
“Anyway, I bought this black 1937 Ford, and I drove it all the way back to Detroit from Houston and when it would break down people would fix it for free, because it was really cool. It was *lovable*. I took it into car shows after that and won prizes with it. But it wasn’t a hot rod—it was a stocker. But it was perfect! They copied that car to do the [Plymouth] PT Cruiser; it was that body style. It was the ideal little hot rod, even though it wasn’t a hot rod.”



Pinstriping custom taillights 1960

Asked if he was a tinkerer who liked to get under the hood, Mouse laughs and says, “I tried it, but I wasn’t very good at it. I put a motor in a ’51 Ford once. It fell out; I didn’t do the motor mounts right.” That was okay, though, because by then Mouse had the hot rod art thing *down*.

By the late ’50s, Ed “Big Daddy” Roth was the most famous practitioner of “weirdo” art—the bizarre, caricatural fusion of hot rods and monsters. His work was published in *Car Craft* magazine as early as 1958, and he traveled far and wide airbrushing shirts at car shows, much as Mouse did just a couple of years later. Mouse, too, put ads for his own shirts in *Car Craft* beginning in 1961. Roth also made a name for himself designing hot rods and custom cars in the early and mid-’60s, and some of his hot rod/monster designs were even picked up by the Revell plastic model company and sold at toy stores—as were some of Mouse’s designs by Monogram Models in 1964.



State Fair Booth 1961
Detroit

Mouse knew Roth's work, of course, and it turns out Roth knew Mouse's too: At a hot rod show in Pittsburgh in the very early '60s, Roth asked Mouse if he could set up an airbrushing station next to his at the show, arrogantly suggesting that Mouse could learn something from being in close proximity to the acknowledged master of the medium. He said that he could show Mouse how to make \$300 at a car show, rather than \$100. Roth did earn \$300 that day, but the much faster-working Mouse took in \$1000. It helped, too, that Mouse colored in his art, while Roth worked in black and white.

"Roth took my catalog back to L.A. and showed it to the first weirdo artist, Monté [Don Monteverde]," Mouse wrote in *Freehand: The Art of Stanley Mouse*. "They took my hot rod character, 'Freddie Flypogger,' added rodent-type ears, nose and tail, and called it 'Rat Fink.' In one fell swoop, they took my character and stole my identity." Roth's Rat Fink first appeared in *Car Craft* in mid-1963, long after Mouse had popularized Freddie Flypogger. Even so, a few years after that first meeting, Mouse was excited when Roth agreed to pin-stripe his Porsche C-Coupe at a hot rod show: "To have him stripe my Porsche was epic!"

Mouse has never lost his fascination with cars, and he's continued to create weirdo art through the years. After all, in those circles he is something of a legendary figure, just as he is in the rock art world. "Hot rod art has been coming back with a vengeance," he comments. "There's a big gear-head, hot rod subculture that you don't see so much here, but is big all across America. It's kind of an anti-rich-guy hot rod thing. Like, all these hot rodders grew up and they got a lot of money and they built all these fancy, shiny hot rods. But the new guys are into a different thing—they're called 'rat rods'—and it's more like when people were doing hot rods in the '50s. They've got pin-striping and flames and the guys all have T-shirts with rolled-up sleeves with cigarettes in them, and they act like James Dean, and all the girls look like Betty Page. There are several new rat rod magazines out now and they're all pinups and hot rods."



Econoline van 1964



Mouse painting at Hot Rod Show 1964
Miami



Speed Shift promo 1964

And some feature the artwork of one Stanley Mouse.

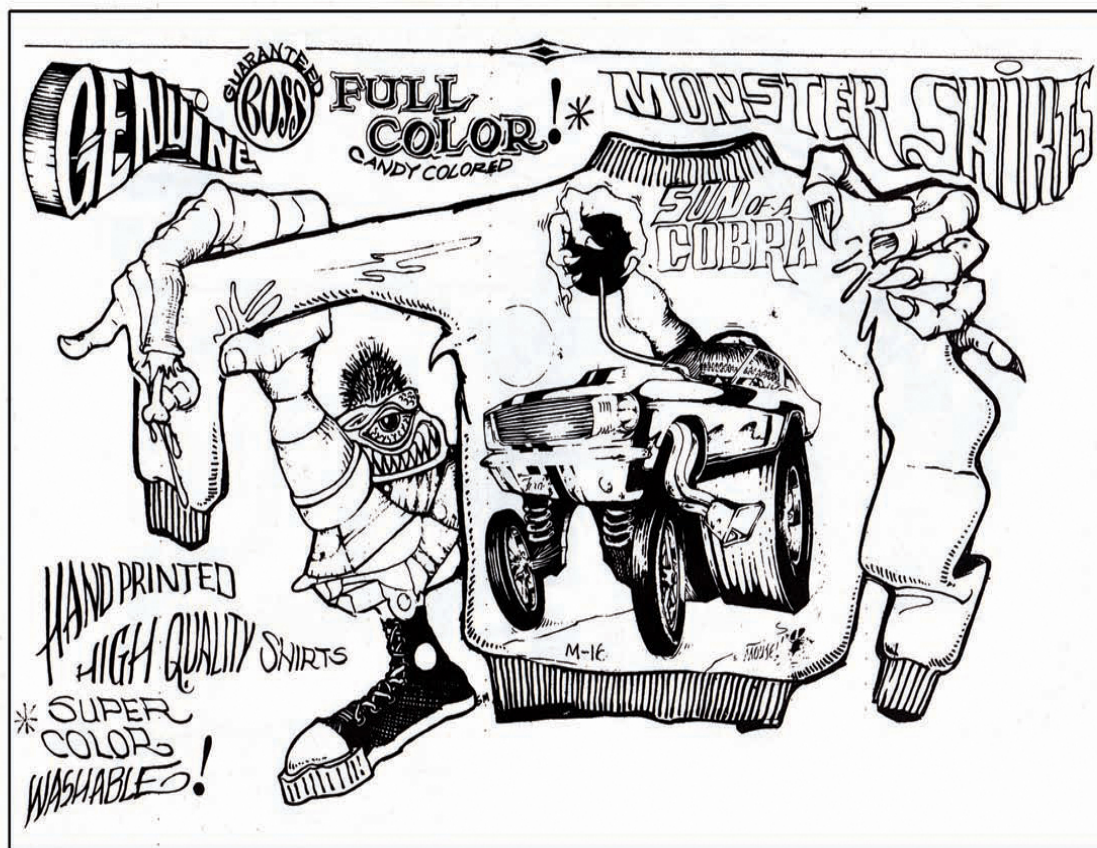


Lee's Drive In 1958

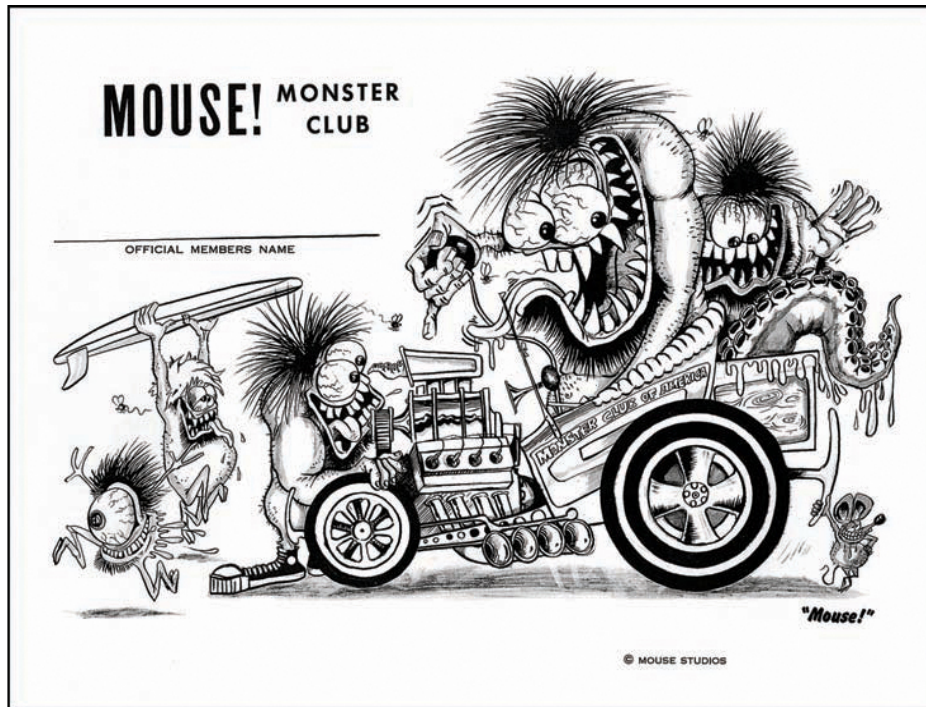
tonneau cover that fit over the back seat of the car in painting



Road Devil early 1960s
advertisement



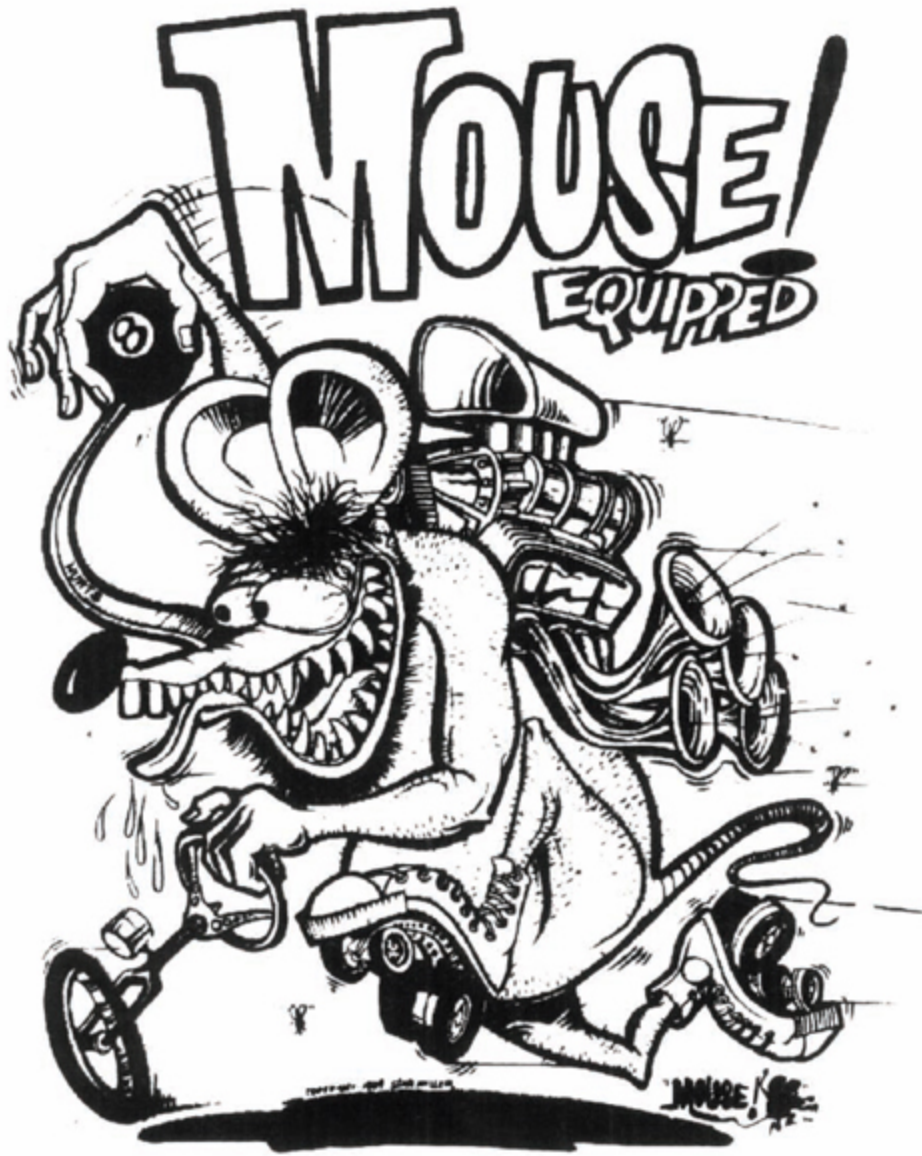
T-shirt ad 1963
pen and ink



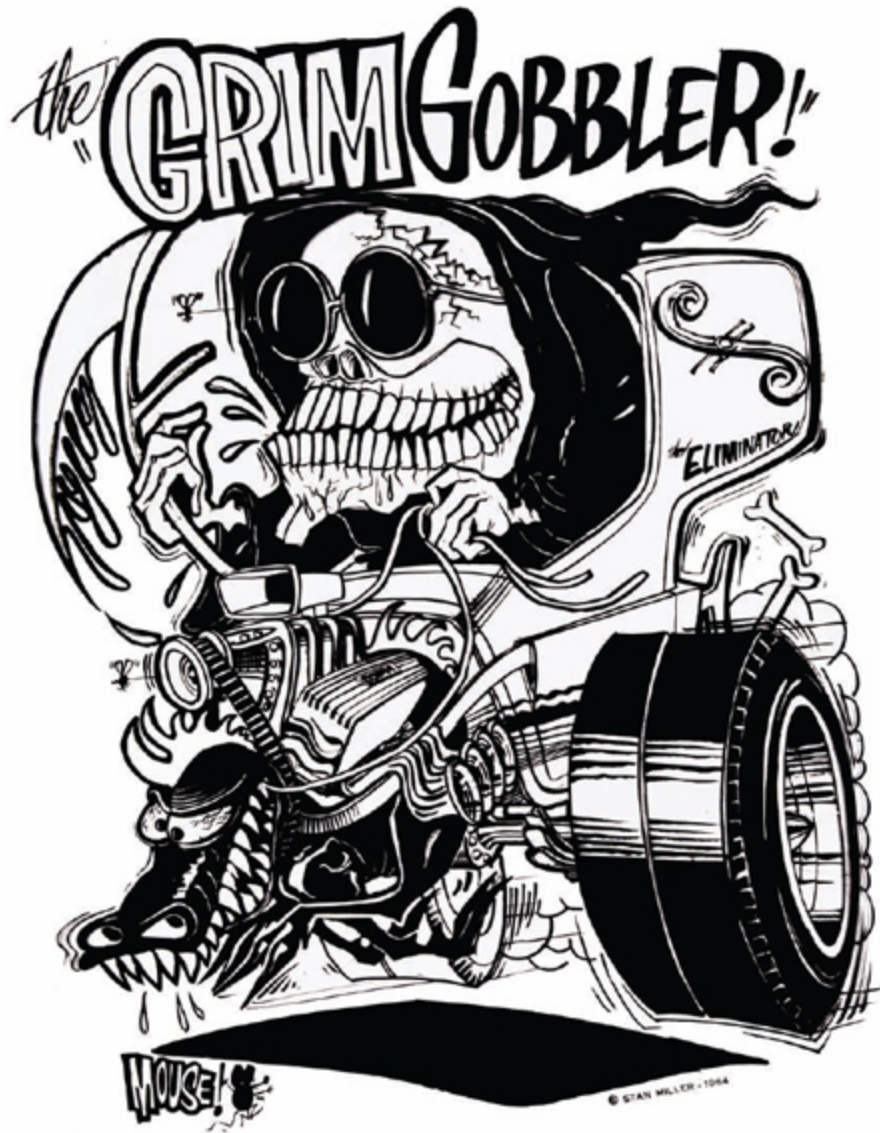
Mouse Monster Club Card 1960
pen and ink



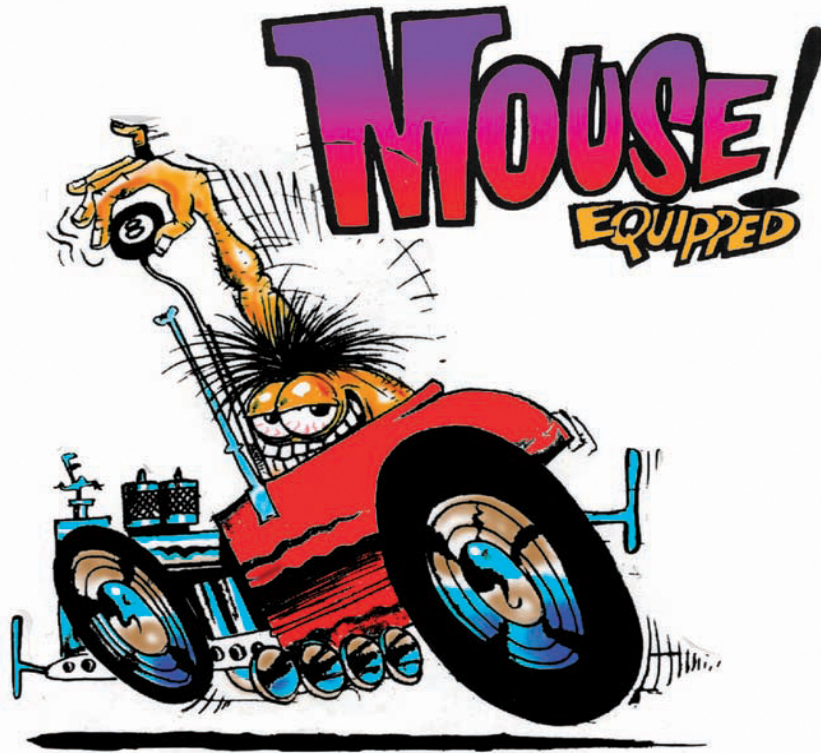
Rod & Custom t-shirt ad 1963
pen and ink



Mouse Equipped 1963
pen and ink



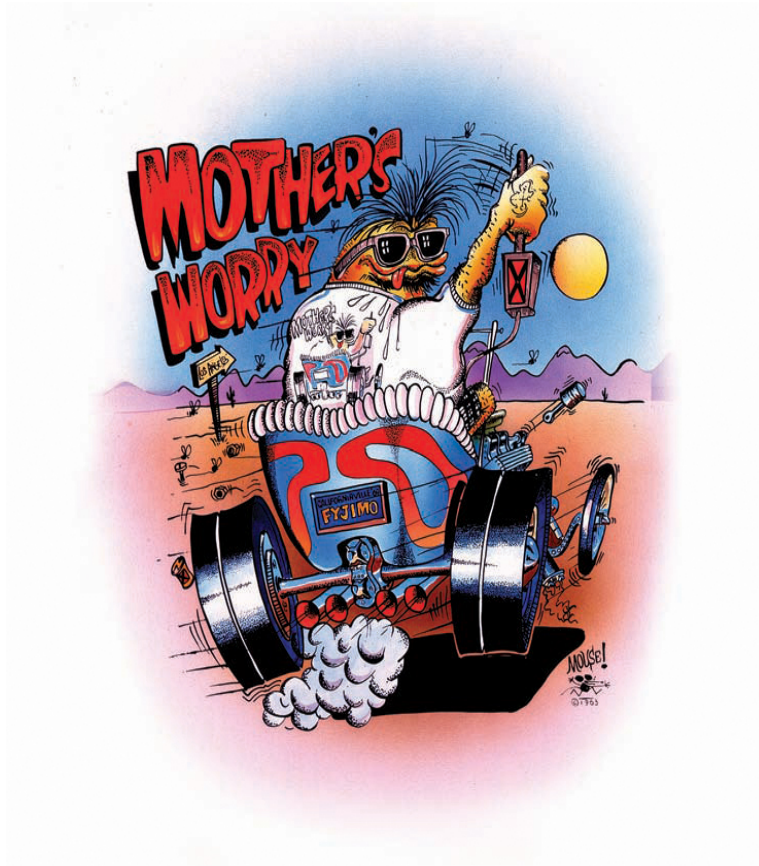
Grim Gobbler 1964
pen and ink



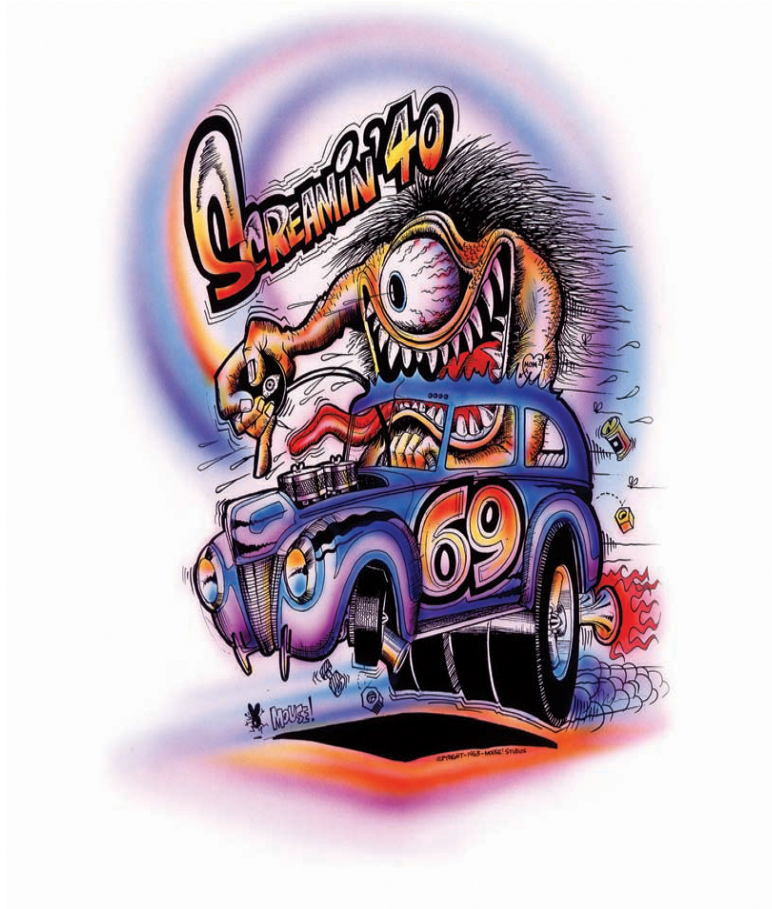
Mouse Equipped Hot Rod 1963
Pen and ink



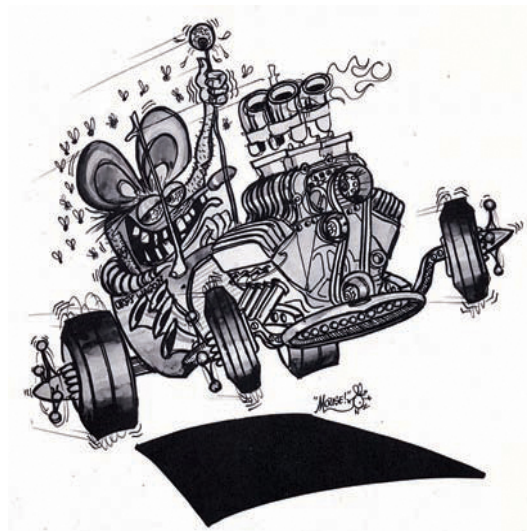
Supershift 1963
airbrush



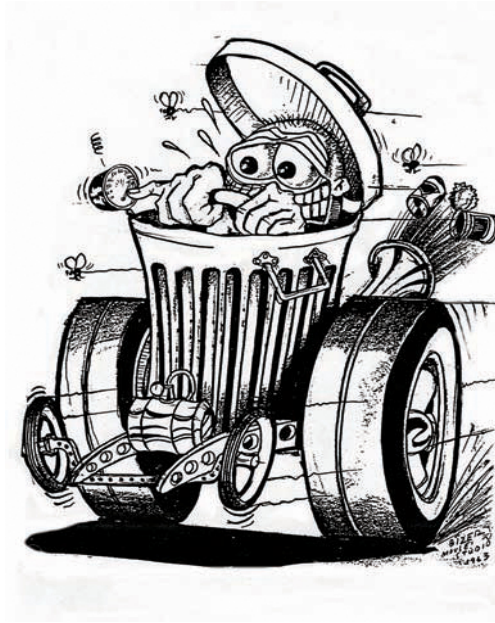
Mother's Worry 1963
pen and ink/airbrush



Screamin' 40 1963
pen and ink/airbrush



Garbie early 1960s
pen and ink



Mouseville early 1960s
pen and ink



Verboten 1963
airbrush on sweatshirt



Surfin' Safari 1963
pen and ink



Unchained 1963
pen and ink/airbrush



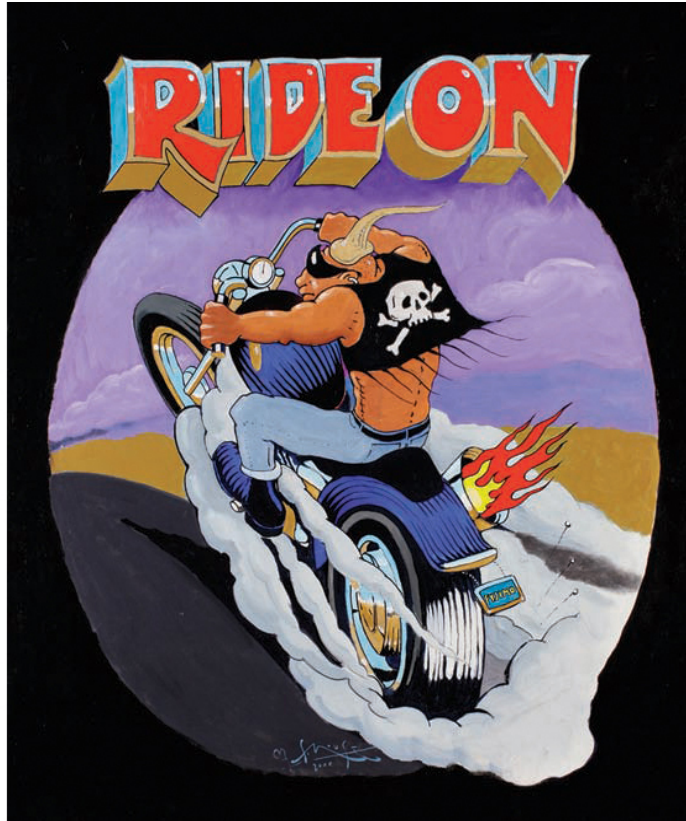
Wild Child 1963
pen and ink



Claw 1963
pen and ink



8 Ball 1990s
pen and ink/digital



Ride On early 2000s
oil on canvas



Warthead early 1990s
acrylic on board



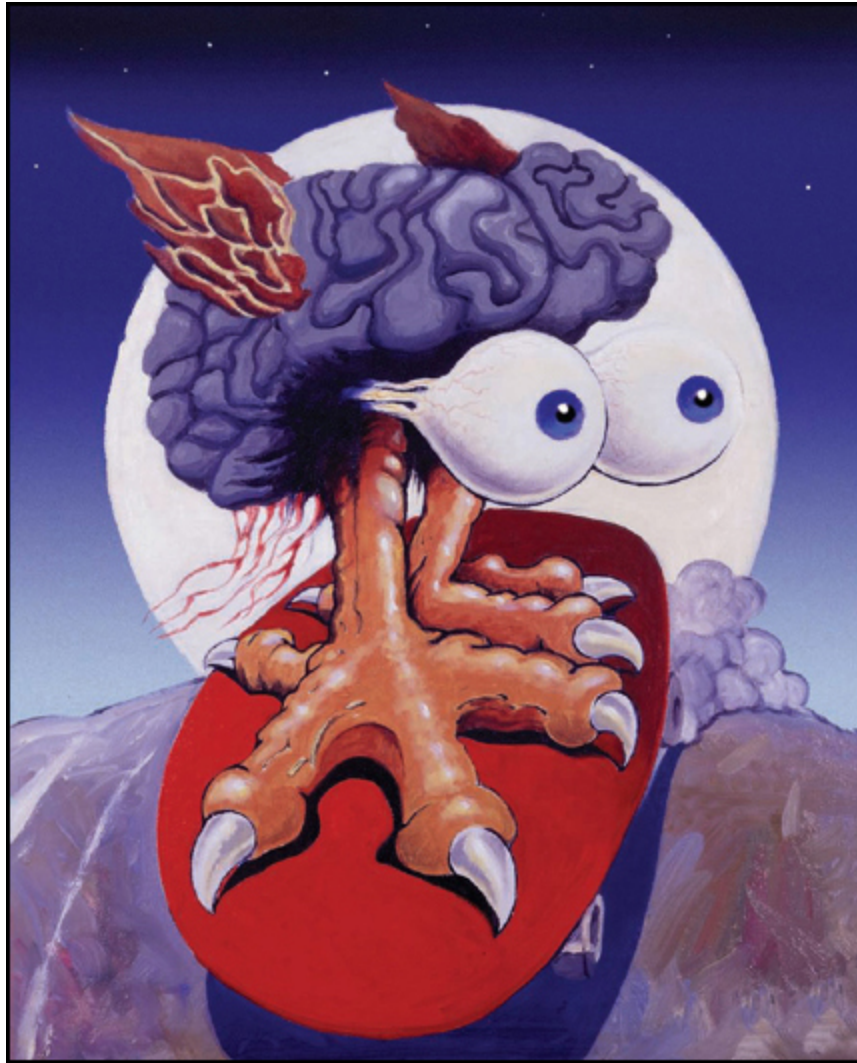
Hell on Wheels mid 1990s
pen and ink



Ultimate Showdown 1990s
oil on canvas



Bomb 2002
oil on canvas / digital



Brain on Board 1990s
acrylic on canvas



Freddy Flypogger 1978
acrylic on board



Liver Which Left Me 1990s
oil on board



Beastie 2010
oil on canvas



Flame Out 2014
oil on canvas



Scumbag Express 2005/2014 oil on canvas



“Big Five” Alton Kelley, Victor Moscoso, Rick Griffin, Wes Wilson, Stanley Mouse 1967
Photo by Bob Seidemen



Big Brother & Quicksilver Zig-Zag 1965
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley

THE SAN FRANCISCO POSTER MOVEMENT

Nearly fifty years down the line, it's easy to forget just how revolutionary the great San Francisco rock poster movement of the mid- and late 1960s really was. There had never been anything like it; the closest antecedent was probably the posters that sprouted up around Paris in the late 19th century, and as beautiful as those were, they weren't nearly as colorful, strange, and outrageously eclectic as what was produced in San Francisco and then imitated all over the world.

In the definitive tome on rock posters, *The Art of Rock* (Abbeville Press, 1987), the Family Dog's Chet Helms offered a cogent analysis of the rise of posters in San Francisco:

"The modern poster originated in belle époque France. Contemporary accounts describe how avid collectors unceremoniously stripped opera and café posters from walls, even before the glue was dry. I believe we experienced a parallel evolution some eighty years later in San Francisco. It was very disconcerting to poster a whole street and then walk back a few minutes later and discover that 90 percent had been removed. But I soon learned that a stolen poster carried home and pasted on the refrigerator reached the audience I wanted . . .

"Posters and handbills are a particularly democratic form of advertising and social expression. Posted in public places, they are available to virtually everyone at little or no cost. The parallels between the belle époque posters and the psychedelic poster are obvious, but the 1960s posters also were rooted in the American free speech tradition of political and social

pamphleteering. The central issue of the 1960s was civil liberty and personal freedom. The posters were vehicles for both . . .”

Picking up on the theme of creative freedom, Mouse’s partner Alton Kelley noted, “We had no real direction. It was wild and wide open and anything went. We just wanted [the posters] to be real visible and real noticeable. There really hadn’t been any posters since World War II—those were the last real visual posters that anyone put out, and they were all war propaganda. So there were no rules . . . I always felt that really helped us in our art because, well, it didn’t really *matter*. You could do anything you wanted to because you were only drawing pictures. So go bananas!”

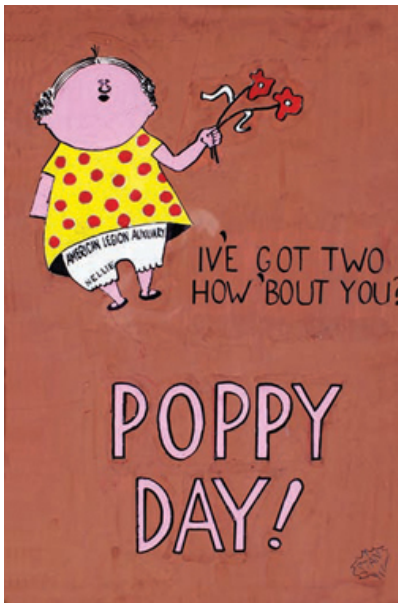


Mouse wins high school poster contest 1958

Of course the posters did have an actual function—usually to advertise some dance or event (everything from gallery openings to music festivals)—but early on, many of the skilled artists who were creating these bold posters decided it was worth it to sacrifice the “message” (i.e. practical info about who, what, where, and when) for the heightened aesthetics that came from conjuring spectacularly inventive, and at times nearly illegible, lettering and juxtaposing colors that literally hurt the eye to gaze upon.

The Dead's Jerry Garcia noted in a 1987 interview, "It was fun looking forward to the posters and seeing them on the street and then trying to figure out how to read them. The first thing that would happen with a lot of the posters would be everyone standing and staring at them—'Let's see, that's an "E."' 'No, no, no, that's "E" up *there*. That's an "M" and the "E" is coming through that part down there!' That was a big part of it—the neo-cryptographic whatever!"

Sometimes forgotten in discussions of San Francisco's poster artists are the offset printers, who were handed the unenviable task of attempting to translate the increasingly ambitious and often hallucinatory visions of the artists onto vellum stock or paper. Mouse says, "We were always pushing the printers, and in a way they didn't know they could do some of the things we asked them to do. A lot of them were straight-arrows who'd been in the business for years, but they were still San Franciscans, so they were maybe a little bit different. And they *liked* the creativeness. A big part of it was an exploration of colors and what colors were most psychedelic together.



Poppy Day 1958
Mouse's first poster



Alton Kelley 1967

“The early posters were printed on a one-color press, so it was almost like print-making in a way—doing hand-pulled prints. They were incredibly vivid. Now, posters all look like magazine covers, because they’re all printed all at once. I used to live around corner from Bindweed Press [which printed many of the early dance posters] and they would do it one color at a time. Kelley and I would be there badgering the owner. He lived there so he couldn’t run away,” he says with a laugh. Over time, more sophisticated printers/lithographers came onto the scene, including Cal Litho and, most famous of all perhaps, Levon Mosgofian’s Tea Lautrec operation.

Looking through this collection of Mouse’s poster work, it’s impressive to see the incredible variety in his art, both with Kelley and working solo. (Indeed, some may be surprised to see how many pieces Mouse did alone, even at the peak of their partnership.) Mouse never got stuck in any particular style; rather he embraced the eclectic and relied on whim, inspiration, and instinct to point him to his next artistic destination. Another thing that is revelatory looking through a large sampling of his work in the late ’60s is how much Mouse did outside of the (justifiably celebrated) Fillmore and Family Dog worlds. There were, in fact, many other small promoters working in the Bay Area who never ascended into the rarified stratosphere Chet Helms and Bill Graham inhabited, but still commissioned

cool posters. Businesses including radio stations, head shops, and art galleries enlisted the artists from time to time.

“In the old days, there was nobody art-directing, and I think that’s why everything came out so amazing,” Mouse says. “We could really do whatever we wanted. But everybody was always trying to turn each other on; that was part of it.”

Not that he didn’t have a poster idea rejected during the Golden Age. Mouse chuckles, “Yes, by Bill Graham, of course. We were going to do one that looked like an old wrestling poster. It was going to be really cool. It was for Traffic, and we got this guy who had a Rolls Royce and we went out to Playland-at-the-Beach [a long-gone amusement park in San Francisco] and a few of us posed as the band—me and Rick Griffin and Bob Seidemann, and Seidemann took the photo. Bill Graham saw it and said, ‘Hey, this looks like a wrestling poster!’ We said, ‘Yeah, you got it!’ But he wouldn’t put it out. He thought we were making fun of the band.”

It’s fascinating to observe the many changes in Mouse’s approach to posters over the years—to see the differences between his early pen-and-ink Avalon work and, say, the spectacularly rendered posters for late ’70s tours by Wings and Led Zeppelin. His 1987 poster for the 20th anniversary of the Summer of Love is an audacious (and perfect) throwback to that time. And some of his more recent posters—for groups such as Furthur and Moonalice—allow him to fully indulge his figurative/fine art side, bringing the Mouse story full circle in a way.

We never know what to expect from Mouse, and he wants to keep it that way.

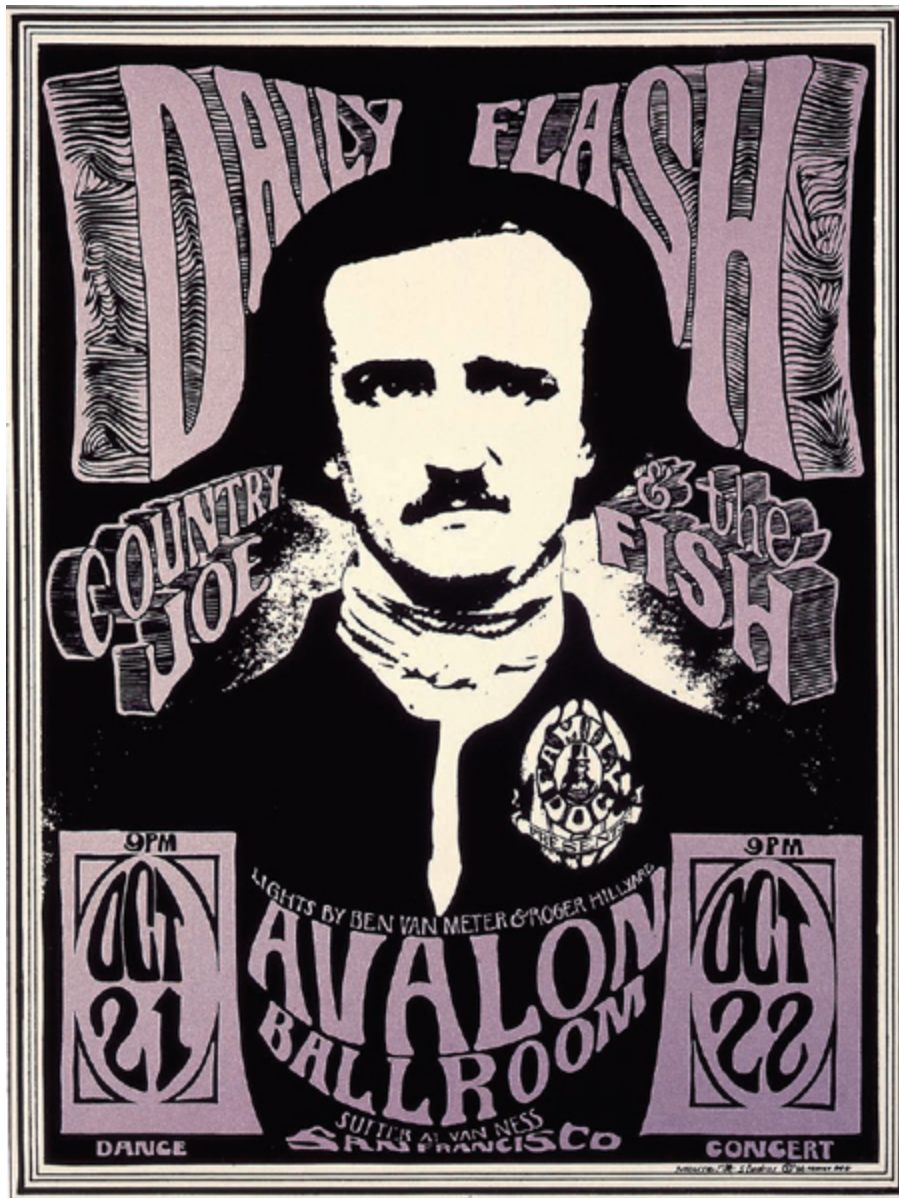


Mouse at Detroit Institute of Arts exhibition of his work 1970

Photograph by Tim Ligosky



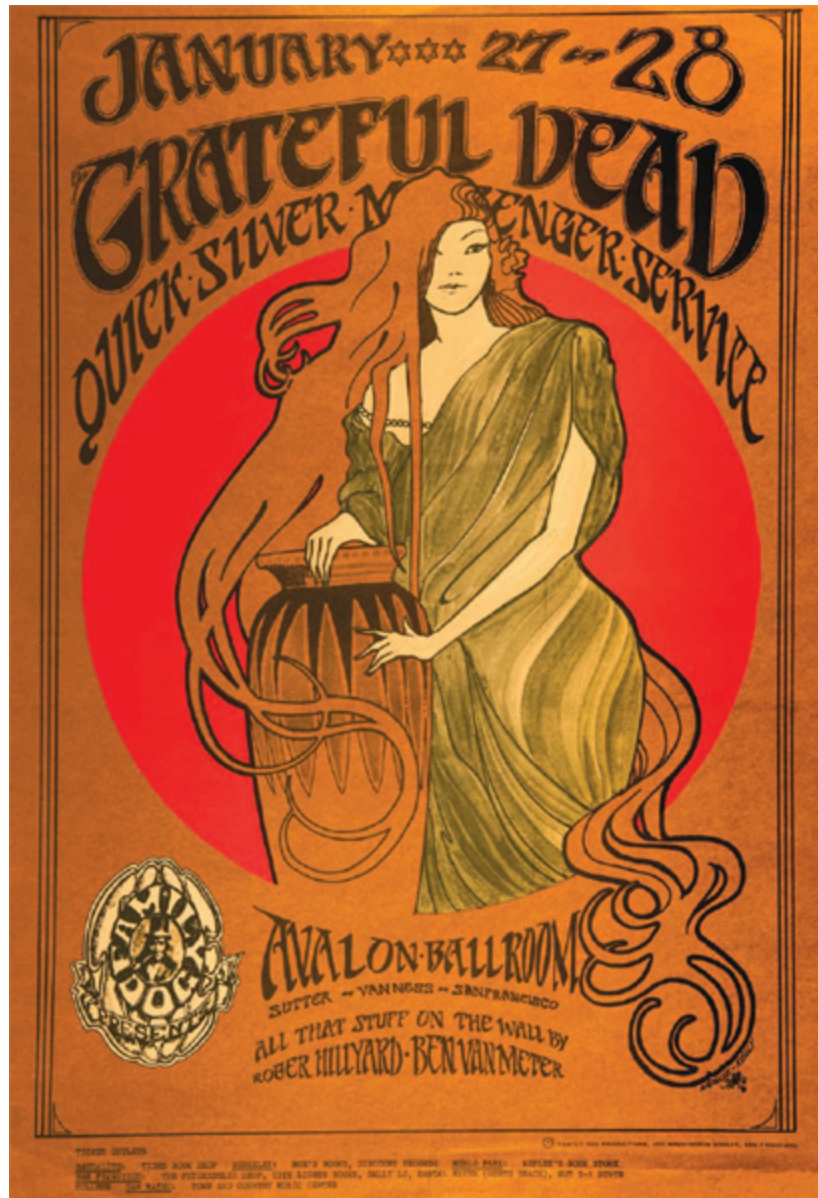
Gloria Swanson 1966
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Daily Flash 1966
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



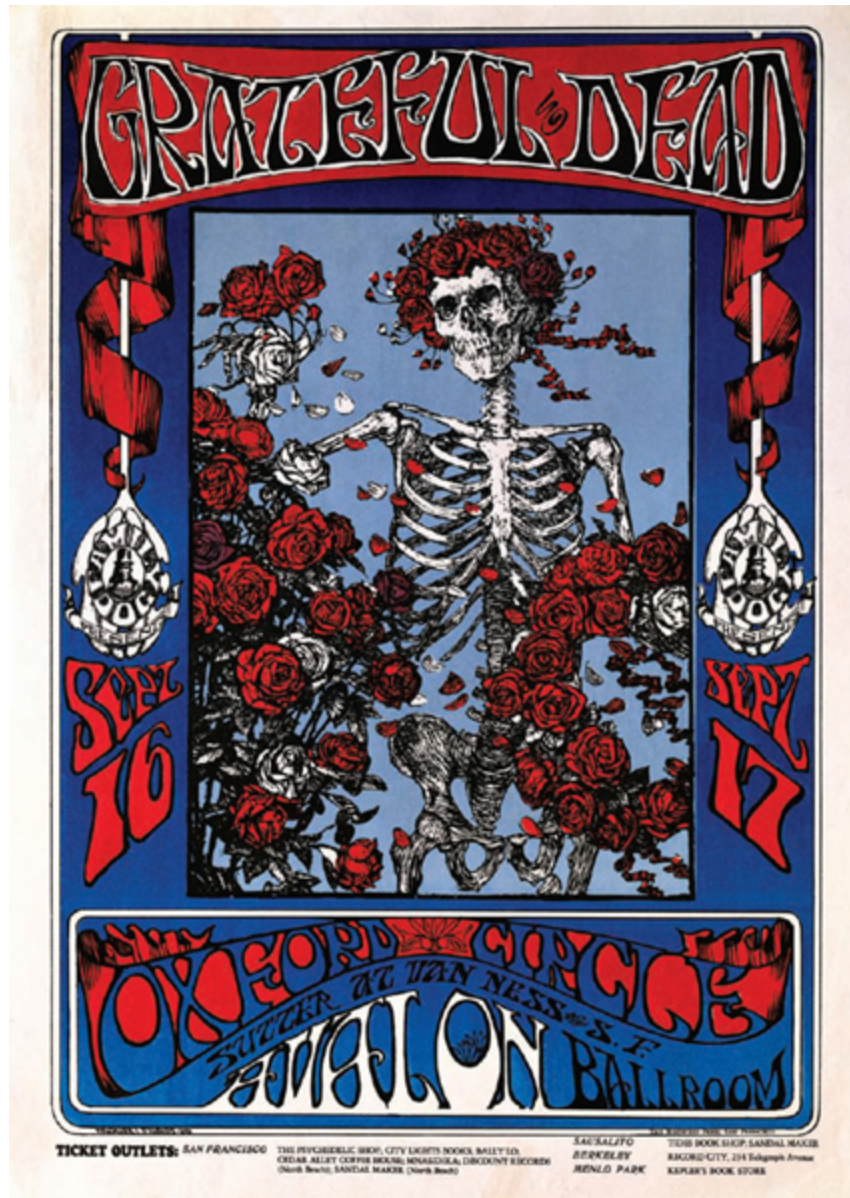
Oxford Circle Family Dog 1966
 ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley and Wes Wilson



Red Dot 1966
 ink on illustration board



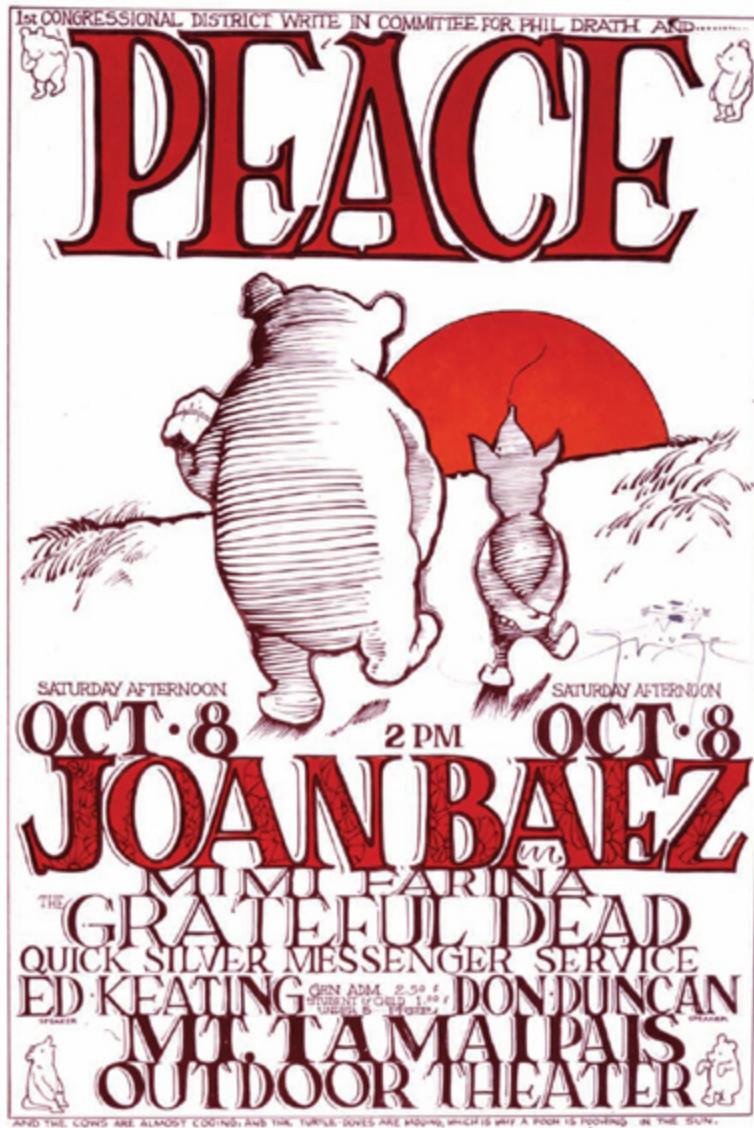
Green Lady Big Brother 1966
 ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Avalon Ballroom Skeleton and Roses 1966
 ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Human Be-In 1967
ink on illustration board



Peace Pooh—Joan Baez 1967
ink on illustration board



Golden Road to Unlimited Devotion 1967
 ink on illustration board Dead Fan Club flyer Mouse/Kelley



Earthquake—Bo Diddley 1966
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Busted 1967
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Sunday Ramparts 1967
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Tuesday Night Jam 1968
ink and airbrush on illustration board



Be Mine 1968
ink on illustration board

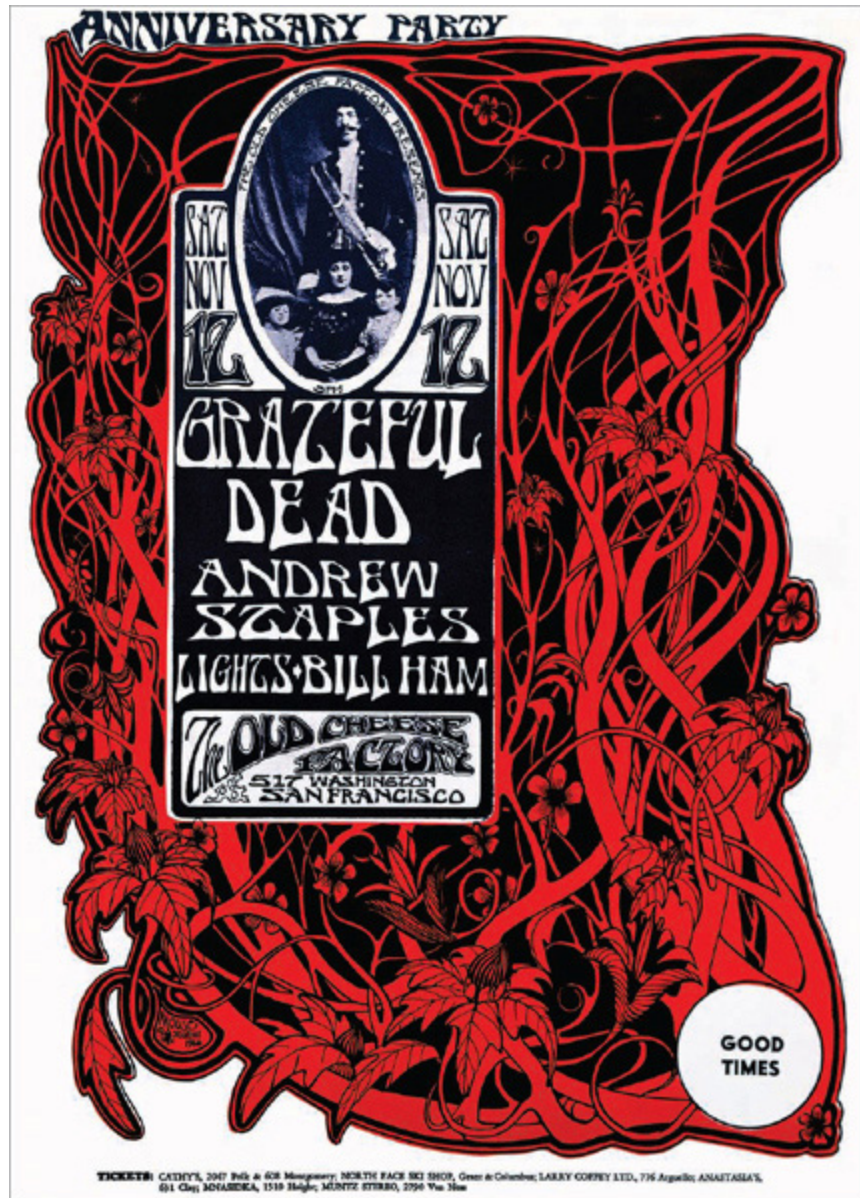


Wilderness Conference 1966
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Howlin' Wolf 1966

ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Cheese Factory Poster 1966
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Edwardian Ball 1966
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



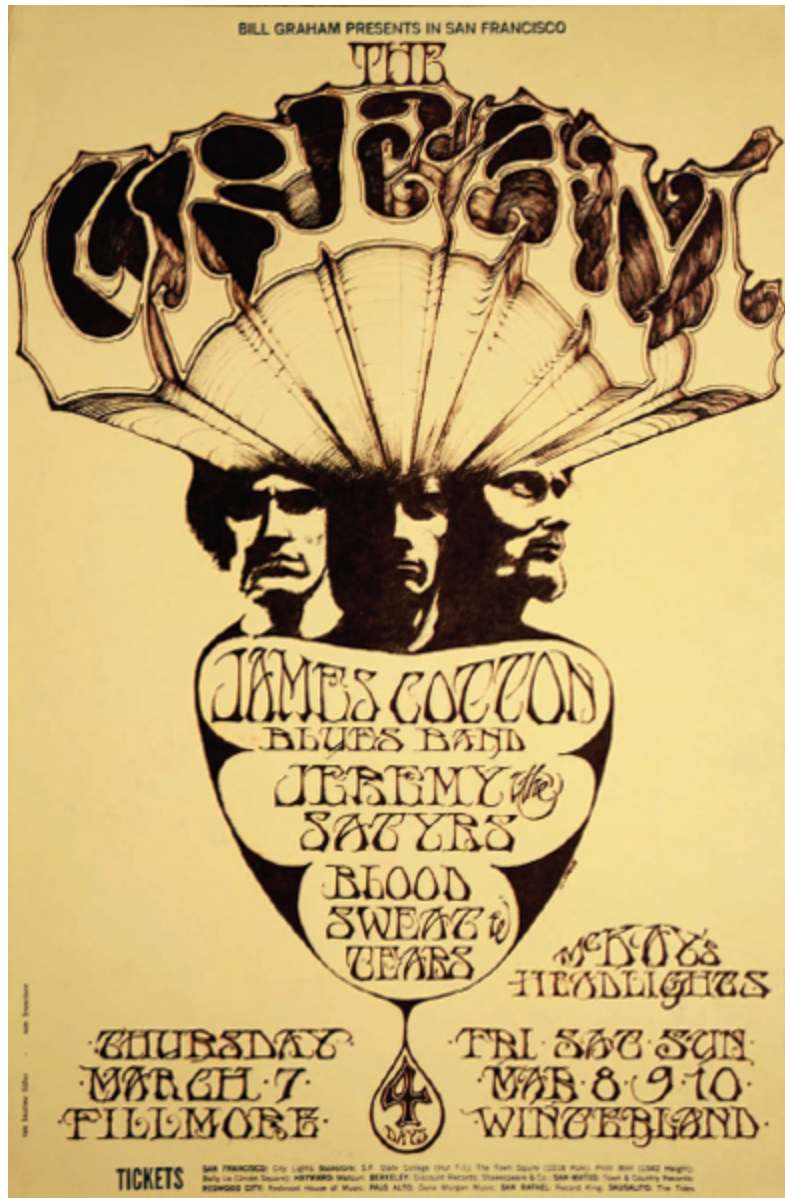
Jefferson Airplane Avalon Ballroom 1966
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Light Sound Dimension 1967
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Mothers of Invention 1967
ink on illustration board



Cream Fillmore 1968
pencil on illustration board



Bo Diddley 1966
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



This Is It 1966

ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley

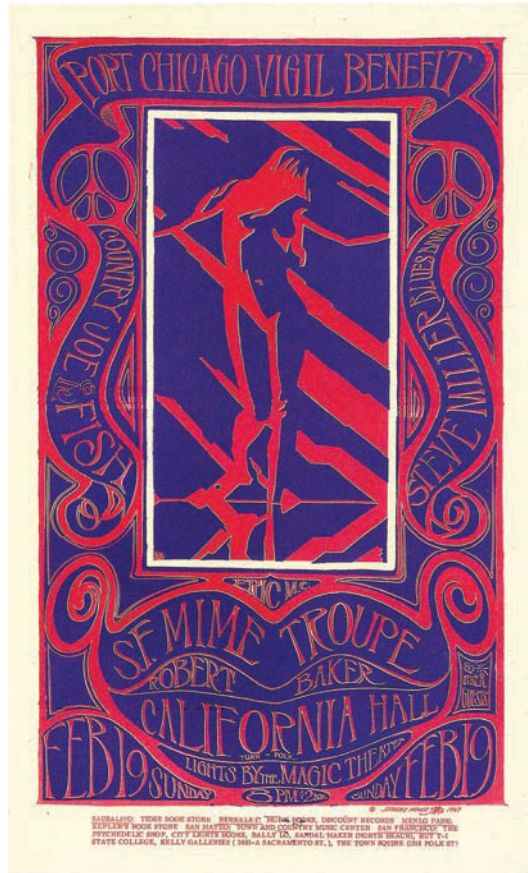


Alfred E 1968

ink on illustration board



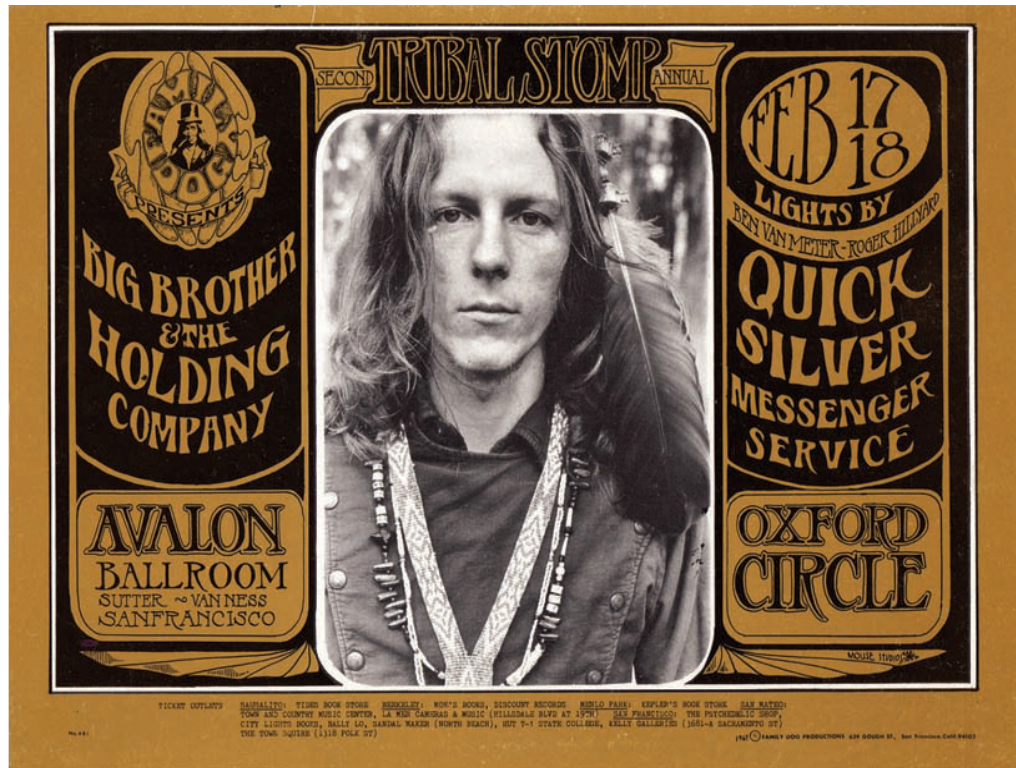
Captain Beefheart 1966
 ink on board



Port Chicago Benefit 1966
ink on illustration board



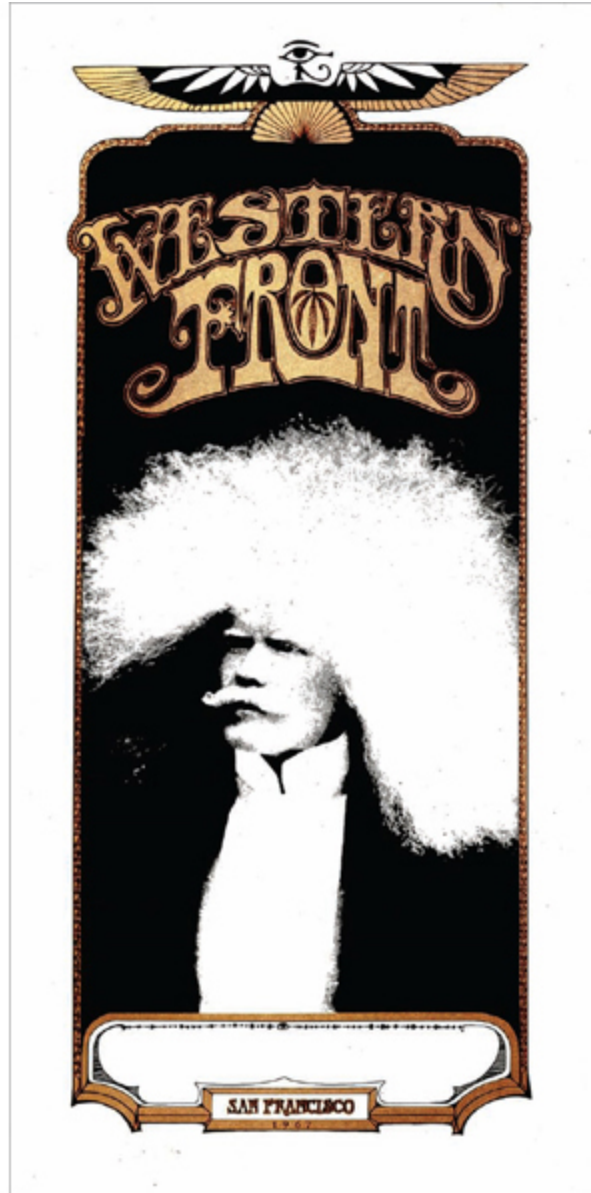
Pacific Ocean Trading Company 1967
ink on illustration board



Tribal Stomp 1966
 ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Trip or Freak 1967
ink on illustration board Mouse, Griffin, Kelley



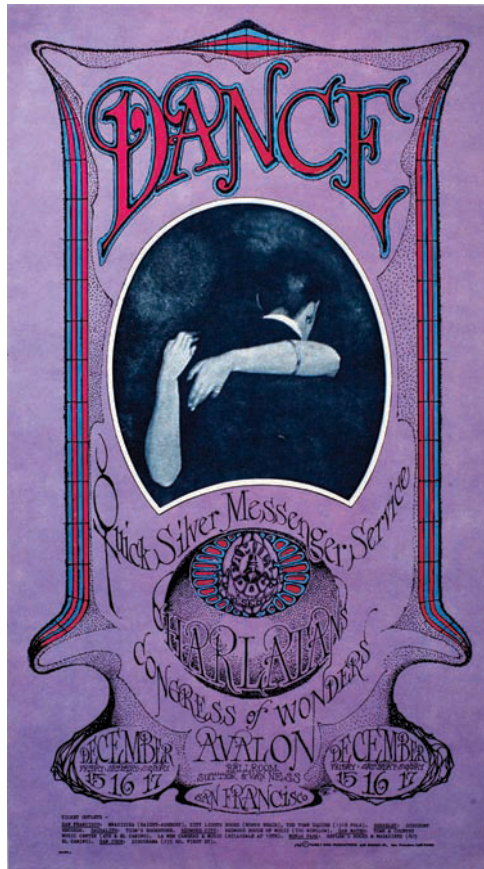
Western Front 1967
ink on illustration board



Wings (Steve Miller Band) 1966
ink on illustration board Mouse/Kelley



Fat Lady 1968
ink on illustration board



Dance 1968
ink on illustration board



Fire Dance 1968
ink on illustration board



Magic Mountain Music Festival 1967

ink on illustration board



Closing of Winterland 1978
acrylic airbrush Mouse/Kelley



Rainbow Angel 1990s
acrylic on board



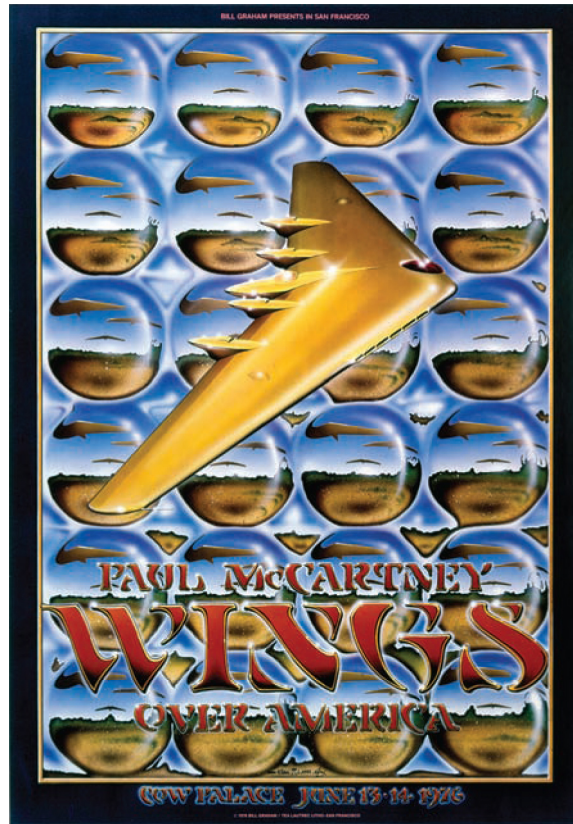
Joint Show 1967
mixed media



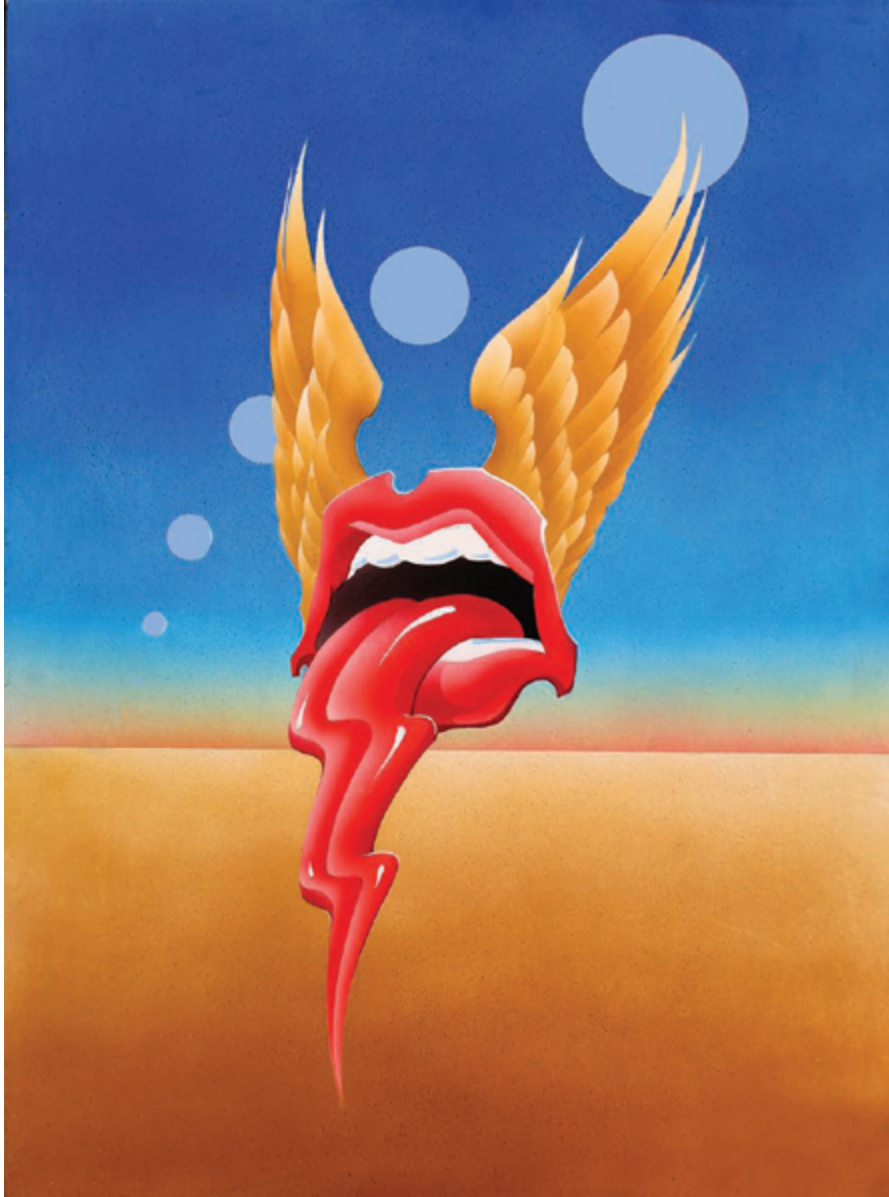
Joint Show 1986
pen and ink



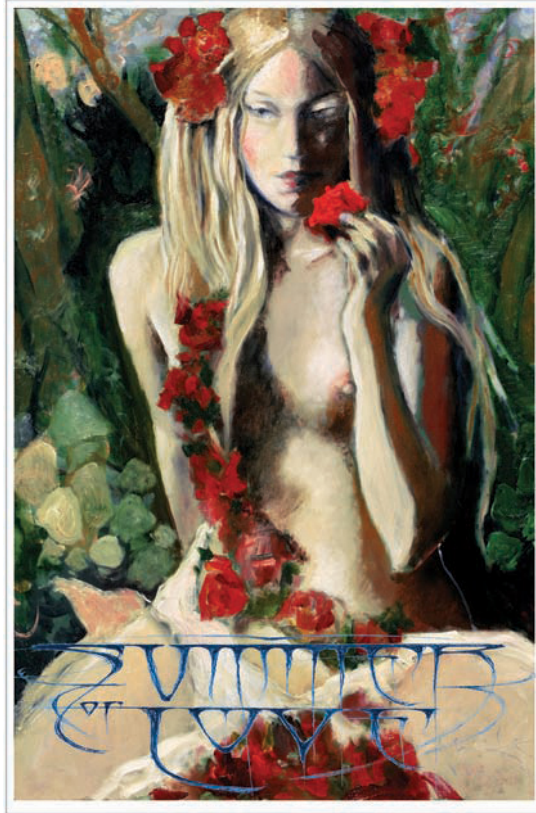
Led Zeppelin American Tour (concept) 1978
acrylic on board



Wings Paul McCartney 1978
airbrush and acrylic on board Mouse/Kelley



Rolling Stones 50th Anniversary (concept) 1990s–2014
acrylic / airbrush / digital



Summer of Love 2002
oil on canvas



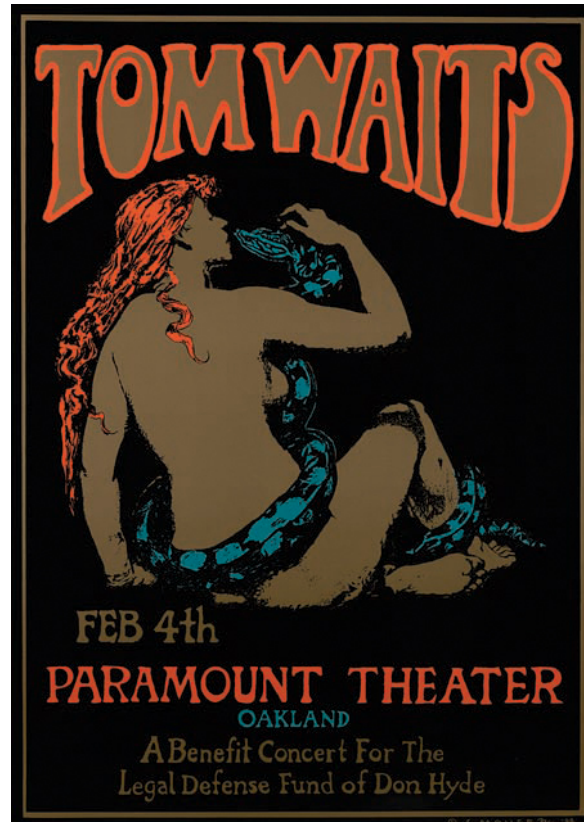
67 Summer of Love 20 Year Anniversary Collaboration 1987

ink on illustration board

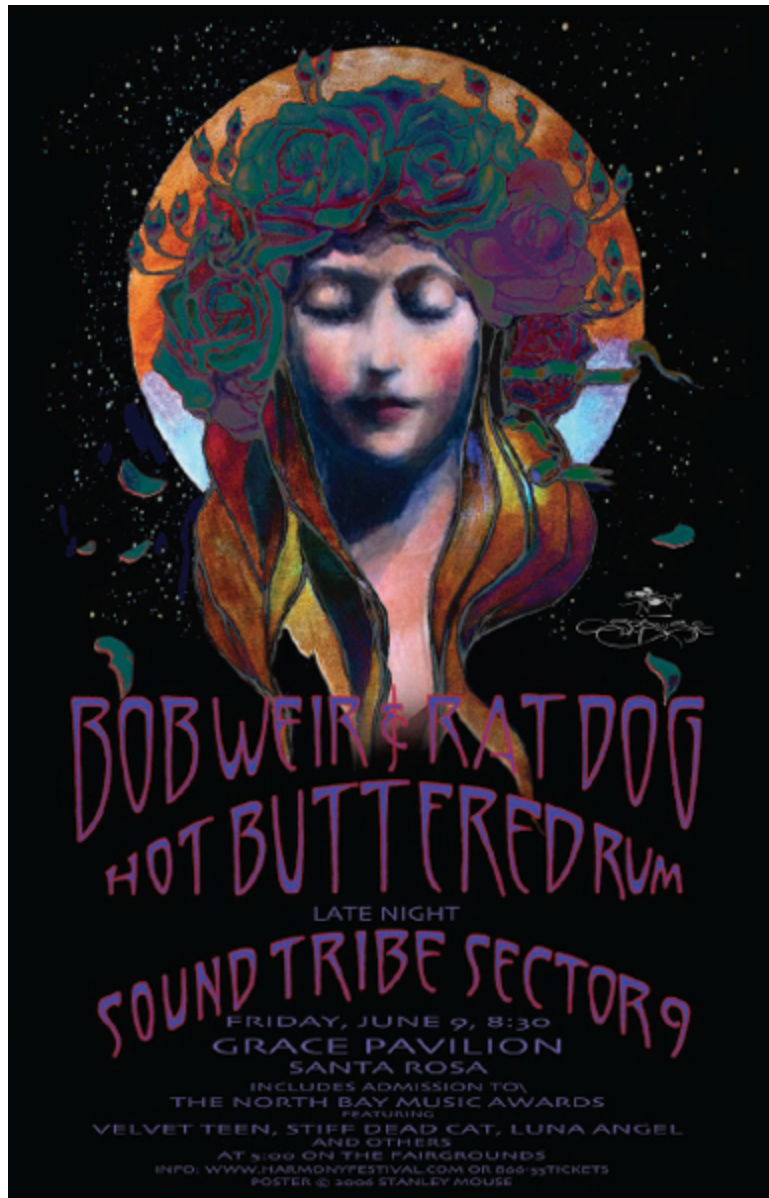
Collaboration by Alton Kelley, Victor Moscoso, Rick Griffin, Wes Wilson, and Stanley Mouse



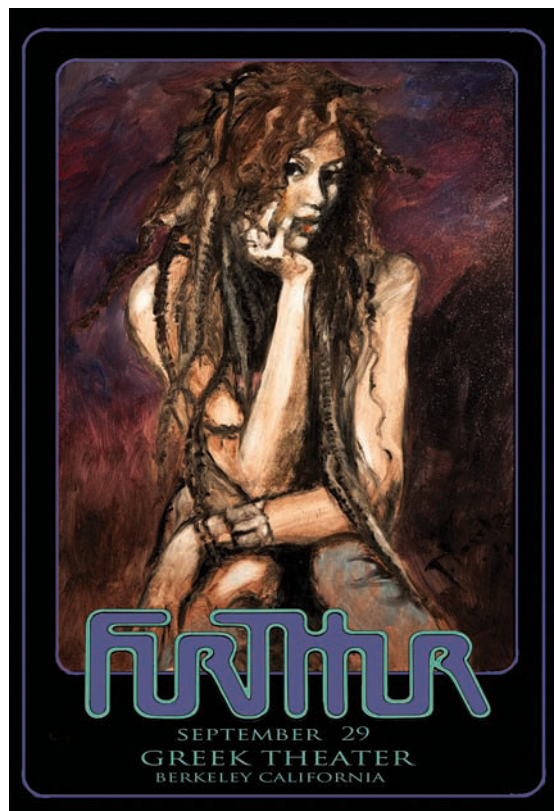
Audioslave 2005
pencil / digital

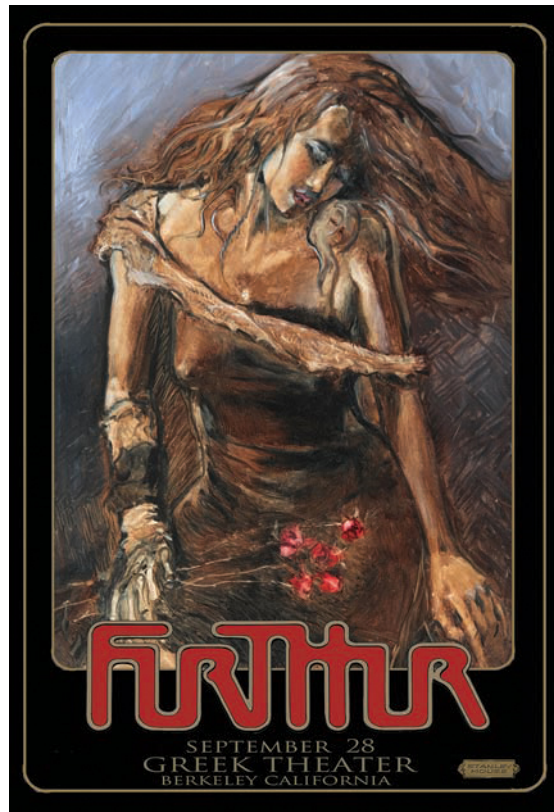


Tom Waits 1996
ink on illustration board



Bob Weir & Rat Dog 2006
mixed media

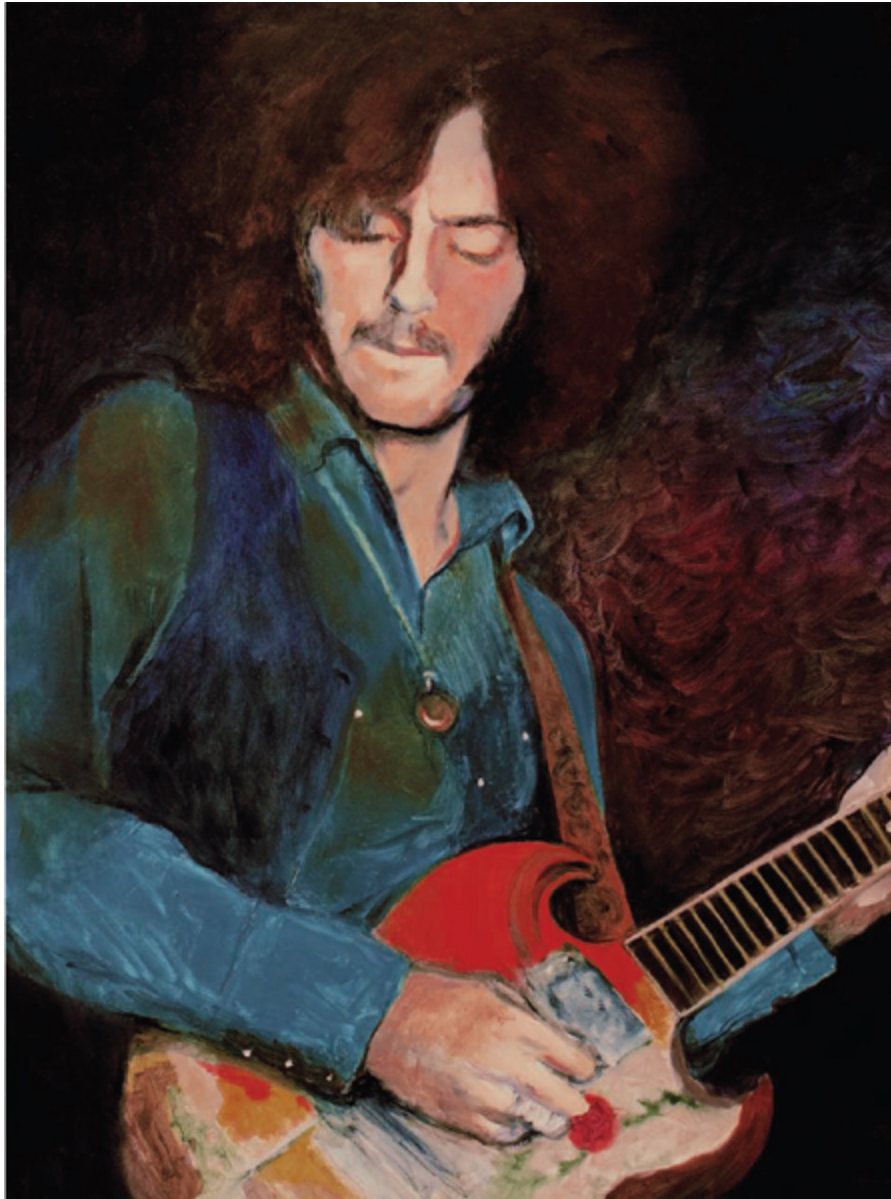




Furthur Greek Theater 2014
oil on canvas / digital



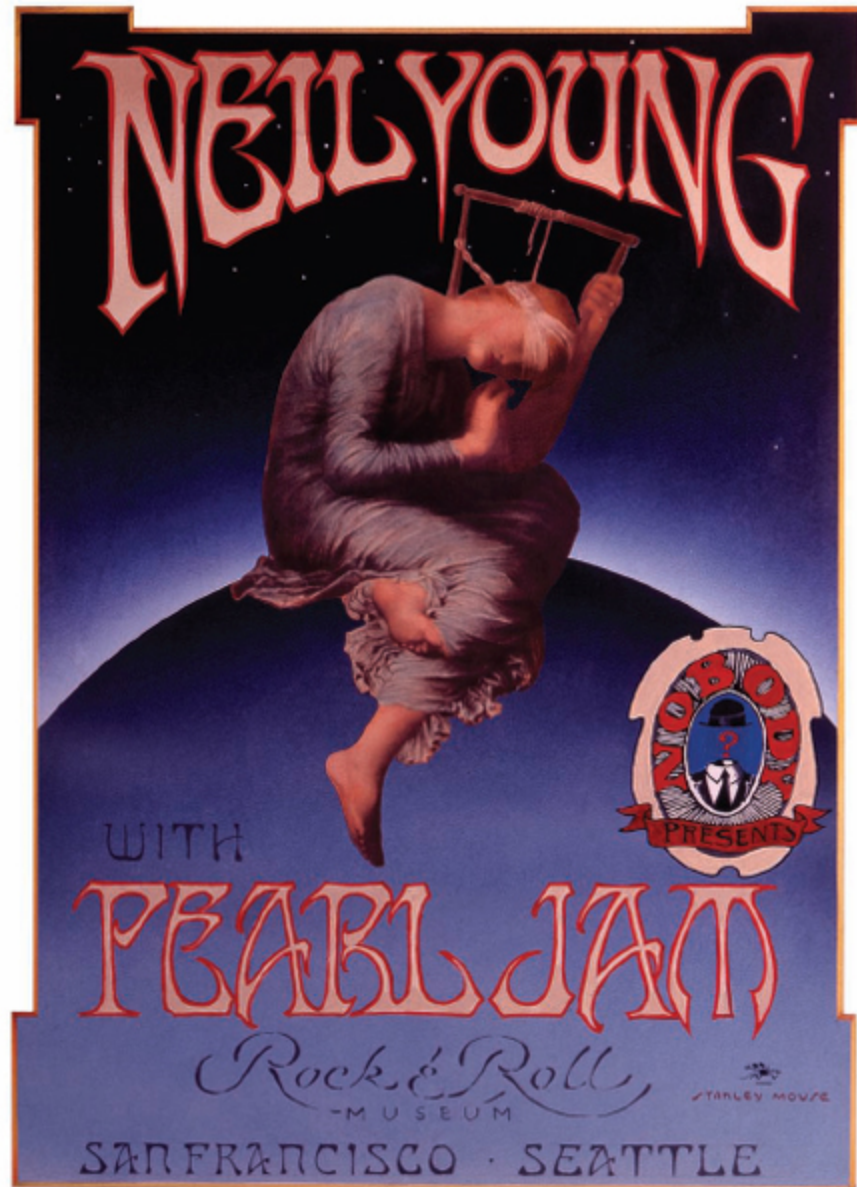
Eric Clapton 2010
mixed media



Eric Clapton 2010
oil on canvas



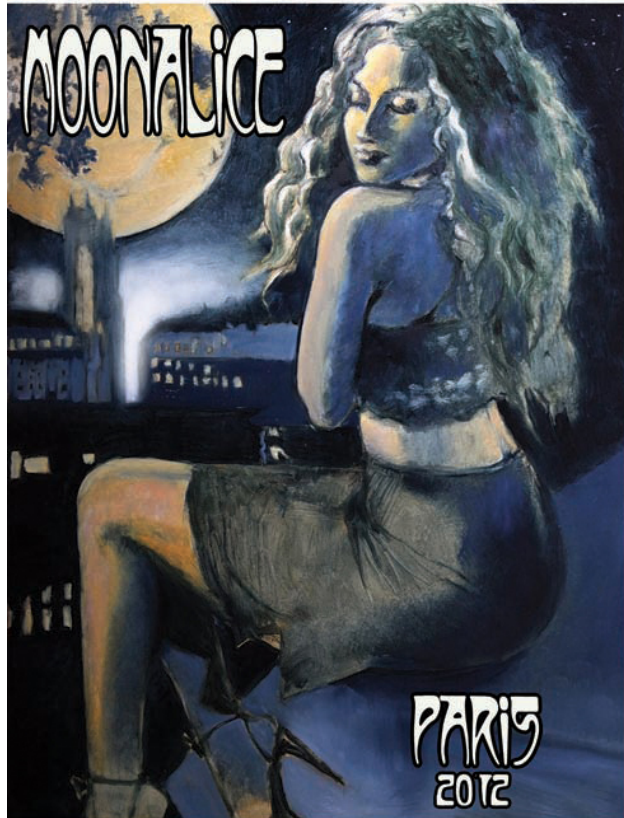
Pearl Jam Modigliani 2013
oil on canvas / digital



Neil Young and Pearl Jam 1990s
oil on canvas / digital



Moonalice 2011
oil on canvas



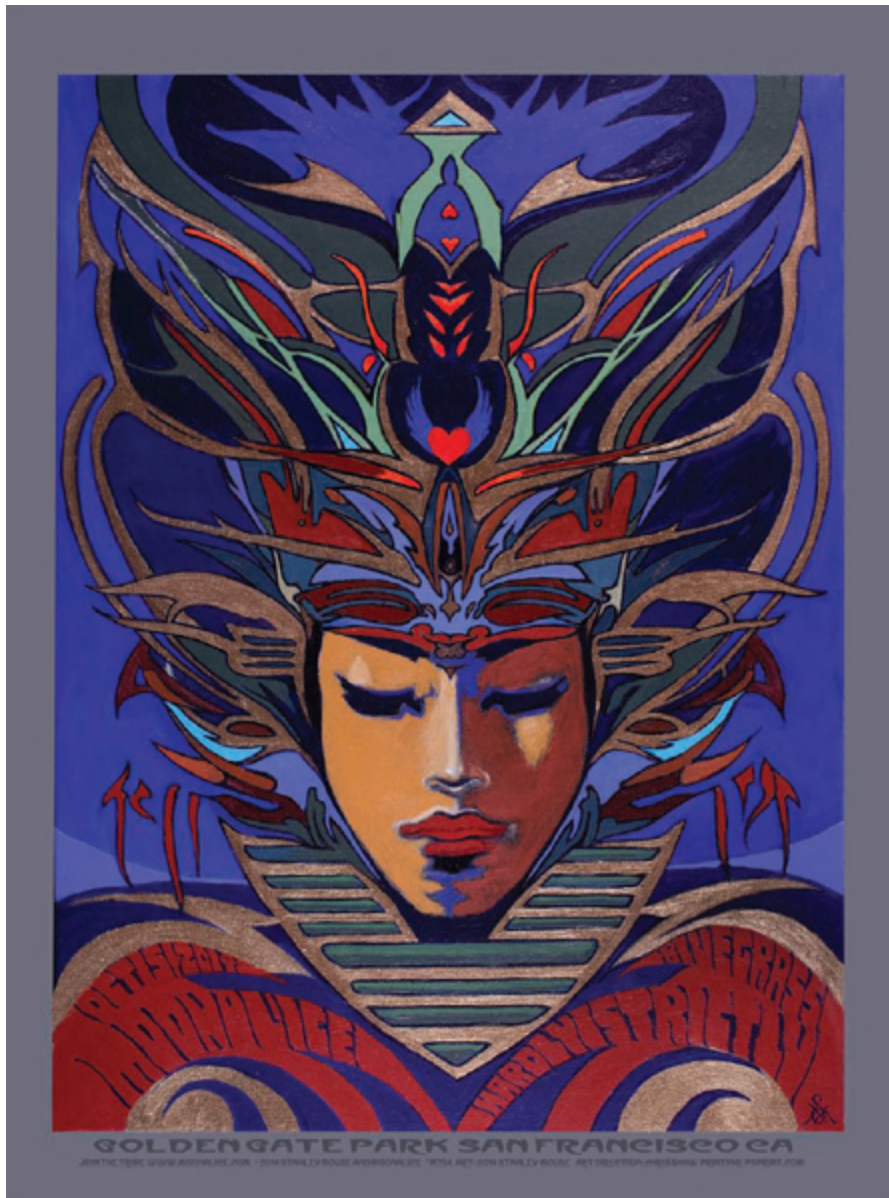
Moonalice Paris (concept) 2012
oil on canvas / digital



Dopey Moon Eye 2013
oil on canvas



Moonalice Hopmonk 2013
acrylic on canvas



Moonalice Hardly Strictly Bluegrass 2014
acrylic on canvas





Grateful Dead/Europe '72 album art front and back covers 1972
airbrush on board Mouse/Kelley



Steve Miller Band/Book of Dreams 1978
airbrush Mouse/Kelley

ROCK ALBUMS AND BEYOND

Given the far-reaching popularity of San Francisco's rock poster movement in the late '60s—it was tremendously influential almost from the start—it's a bit surprising that more commissions for album covers didn't come to the scene's top counterculture artists. The reason for this was actually simple—all the major record labels already had established art departments whose job it was to create covers for the company's acts, the overwhelming majority of whom were oriented toward a music mainstream still mired in a bland, late '50s, early '60s mindset. The Beatles chipped away at that musically, and Dylan blew the doors open lyrically, and then came the flood of boundary-busting renegades from everywhere, including the first wave of psychedelic bands in America and England.

With the proliferation of SF rock posters in the first “head shops” around the country, and the art's massive exposure in the dominant media outlets of the day—magazines such as *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *Look*, all desperate to appear hip and relevant—it was only a matter of time before the once-staid record companies got into the act and began trying their hand at creating their own version of psychedelic art for their album covers. Not surprisingly, this led to many inept and embarrassing failures, but occasionally the labels were smart enough to move away from their usual art assembly lines and hire genuinely creative people who actually understood the music the new bands were making, and dug the challenge of turning that 12 × 12 package into a real work of art.

Mouse and Kelley were the first of the Big Five SF poster artists to land an album cover commission, for the Dead's self-titled debut in 1967. Kelley

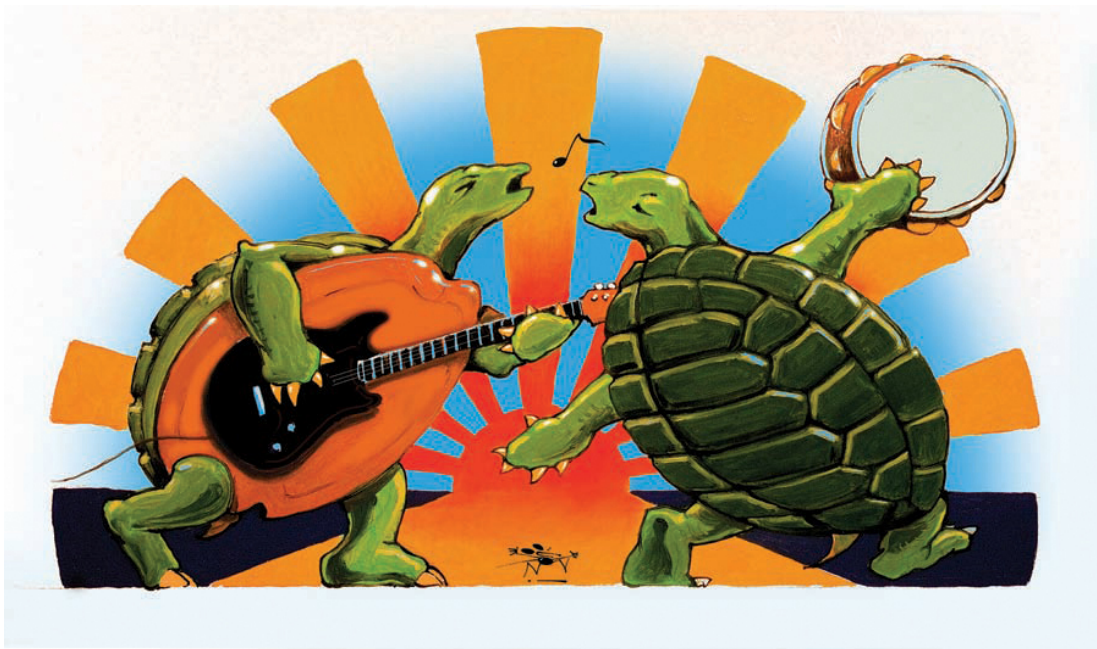
recalled that when the duo handed in the design, with a trippy collage and *very* San Francisco lettering, Warner Bros. “were super-pleased, because their in-house art department had been doing covers for Frank Sinatra and had no idea what to do with the Grateful Dead! They were thrilled. It was fairly avant-garde for its time.” The Dead did ask one change—originally, the lettering above the group’s name quoted a passage from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, which was popularly (but erroneously) believed to have been the source of the band’s name: “In the land of the dark the ship of the sun is drawn by the Grateful Dead.” The band wanted the quote taken off, so Mouse simply made the lettering illegible, adding to the mystery of the cover.



Kelley and Mouse 1978
acrylic on board Mouse/Kelley

Three years later, Mouse and Kelley began a stretch where they worked on four straight covers for the Dead—*Workingman’s Dead*, *American Beauty*, *Grateful Dead* (“Skull & Roses”), and *Europe ’72*, each completely

different stylistically, and each a classic in its own way. Two years later they created the fantastical cover of the Dead's *From the Mars Hotel* album, which depicted the actual condemned Hotel Mars, near the San Francisco studio where the album was recorded, but set in some weird, alien planet landscape. This era also found them doing the covers for Bob Weir's first solo album, *Ace*; Dead lyricist Robert Hunter's *Tiger Rose* LP; and art for the Dead's first songbook of sheet music and lyrics—Mouse's skeleton jester on the cover became yet another iconic character in the band's ever-expanding mythic universe.



Terrapin turtles and tambourine 2011
acrylic on board

Similarly, the musical turtles on the cover of the Dead's 1977 album, *Terrapin Station*—one playing the banjo, the other dancing and shakin' a tambourine—also entered the Deadhead artist vernacular and have been appropriated in hundreds of designs since this first appearance. That's fitting, perhaps, as Mouse himself had adapted the turtles from an earlier work by the German artist Heinrich Kley. "When we got the job I said, 'What's a terrapin?' I didn't even know it was turtle," Mouse says. "So we went with a literal 'Terrapin Station.'" Having not heard the song, the artists didn't know that Robert Hunter's "Terrapin Station" was an opaque yet

extremely evocative metaphor for . . . what?—Death? Transcendence? Enlightenment? It's a heavy tune, but the cover is light and festive; remarkably, it worked perfectly. And what were we to make of Mouse's back cover painting of a cyclops skull crossed diagonally behind by a bone adorned with roses and feathers?

In the late '70s and early '80s, sometimes working with Kelley but more often alone, Mouse branched out to do covers and other art work for Steve Miller (*Book of Dreams*, *Greatest Hits*, etc.); poster work for a number of big rock tours through Bill Graham's Winterland Productions; the elegant Egyptian-deco cover of Jerry Garcia's *Cats Under the Stars* album ("I did a whole series of cat drawings for that and the cover is the one Jerry picked," Mouse says), and a series of imaginative airbrush covers for Journey. The first three Journey covers were variations on a similar theme, with enormous, brightly colored wings behind a circular globe or orb. By 1980, though, Mouse had introduced a winged Egyptian scarab beetle into the band's iconography and that was used on a number of the group's albums and posters, sometimes in sci-fi settings; an intriguing mix of ancient and futuristic. The art was, quite frankly, considerably hipper than the mainstream pop-rock under the covers.



Steve Miller Greatest Hits 1978
airbrush

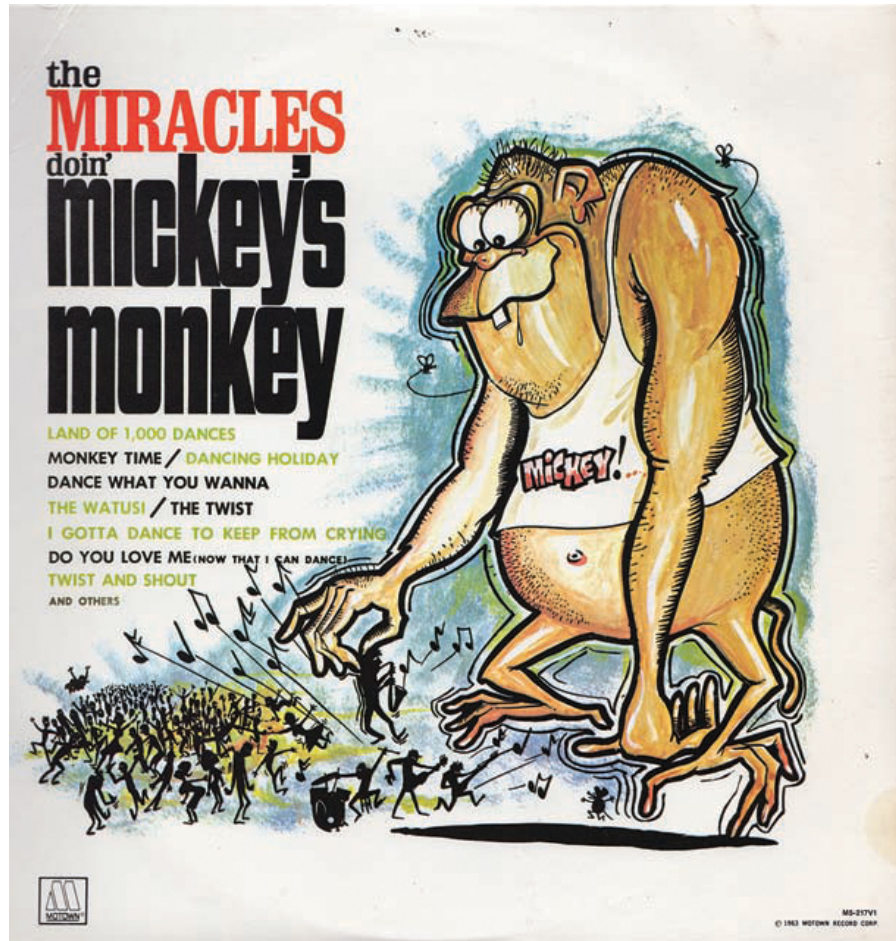
A few of the other pieces in this section that are particularly noteworthy include Mouse's clever/harrowing cover for the Grateful Dead's final studio album, 1989's *Built to Last*, which they rejected in favor of a rather dull and dark band photo; a gloriously psychedelic desert landscape created for the cover of the 1997 David Nelson Band album, *Keeper of the Key*, playing off the cactus imagery associated with Nelson's other band, the New Riders of the Purple Sage; the simple, but appropriately moody cover for *The Doors Live at the Matrix 1967* (2008), with its dramatic cemetery angel image; Mouse and Kelley's dazzling and whimsical re-visit to *Terrapin Station* on a 1997 limited edition live Dead CD (which included a $9\frac{1}{2} \times 14$ foldout poster of the full painting); the striking skeleton photographer image Mouse conjured for the cover of the 1998 book *The Grateful Dead Family Album*—Mouse says the inspiration came from Mucha (the pose does resemble the artist's 1902 advertising poster for "Cycles Perfecta"); and, finally, the utterly

exquisite “Dragon Guitar,” custom built by luthier Scott Walker and painted by Mouse for Moonalice. “That’s got to be one of the coolest things I’ve been involved with in my career,” Walker says.



Mouse and airbrush

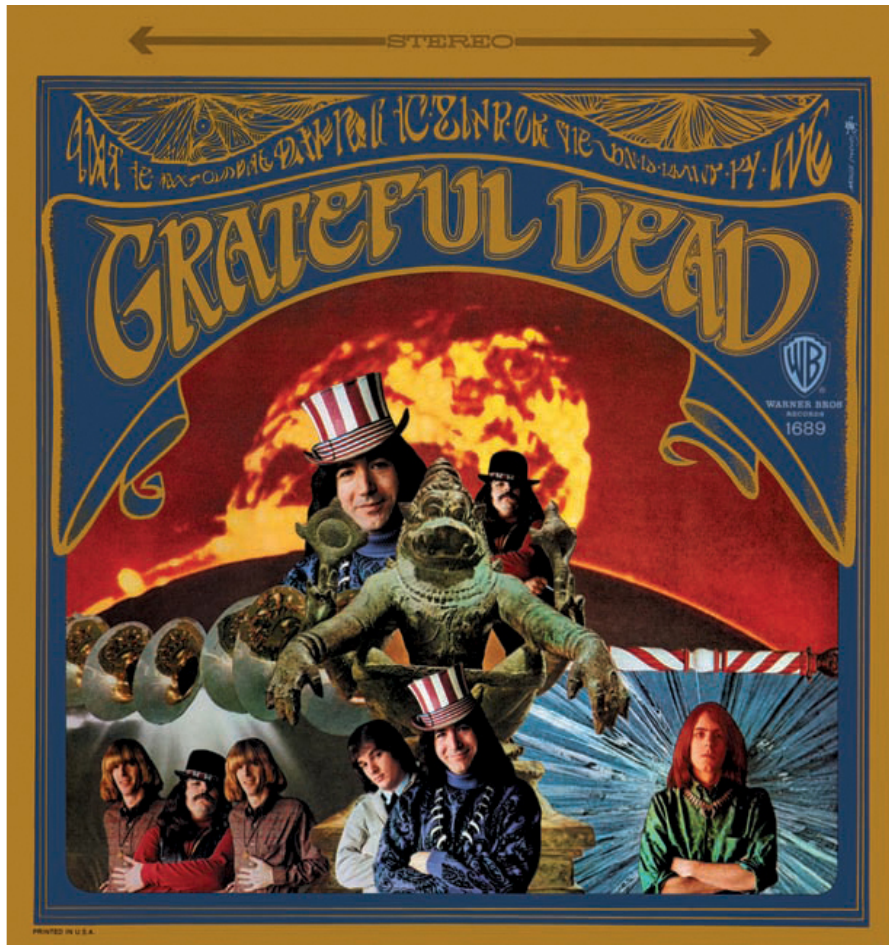
Perhaps it’s just Mouse’s 21st century version of flaming hot rods.



Mickey's Monkey 1963
acrylic on pizza box lid



Mitch Ryder & the Detroit Wheels 1966
acrylic on board



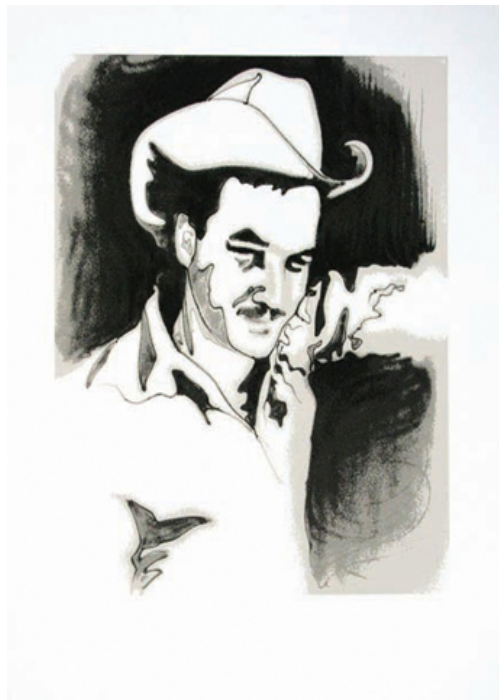
Grateful Dead album cover #1 1967
mixed media Mouse/Kelley



Bob Weir album art 1972
airbrush and acrylic on board Mouse/Kelley



Workingman's Dead album art 1970
photograph



Dead Set Bill 1970
airbrush



Dead Set Phil 1970
airbrush



Dead Set Bobby 1970

airbrush



Dead Set Jerry 1970
airbrush



Dead Set PigPen 1970
airbrush



Dead Set Mickey 1970
airbrush



Cannabis Rex 1967
acrylic on board



California Weed 1975
ink and airbrush on board



Jester 1972
acrylic and airbrush on cotton Mouse/Kelley



Pyramid Jester 1996 to 2010
oil on canvas work in progress



Mars Hotel album art—Grateful Dead 1974
acrylic / mixed media Mouse/Kelley



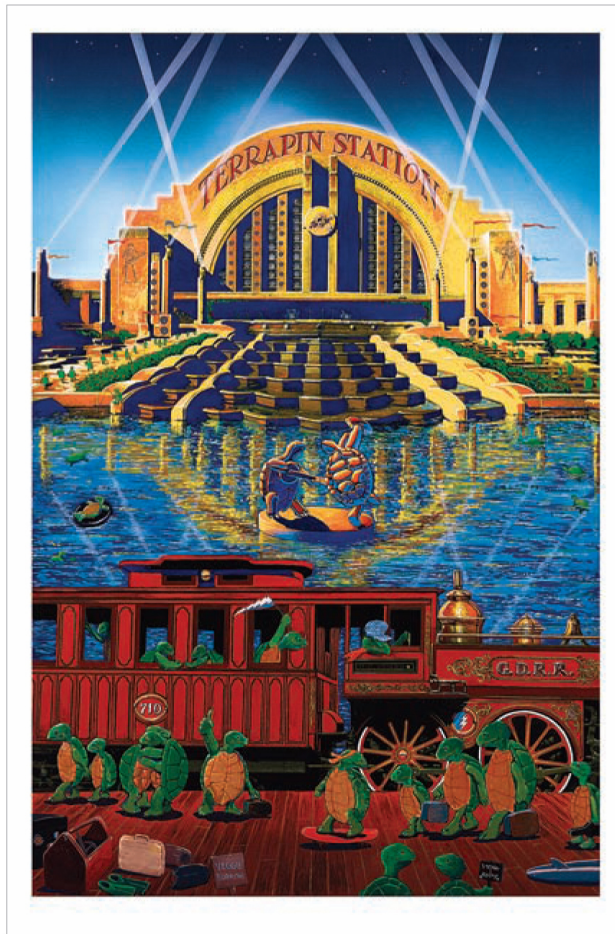
Tiger Rose 1975
airbrush on board Mouse/Kelley



Nuggets 1976
airbrush Mouse/Kelley



More American Graffiti movie poster 1979
airbrush Mouse/Kelley



New Terrapin Station 1997
acrylic on board Mouse/Kelley



Terrapin Station 1977
acrylic on board Mouse/Kelley



Too Cool 1978
acrylic on board



Rose Bolt 1987
acrylic on board



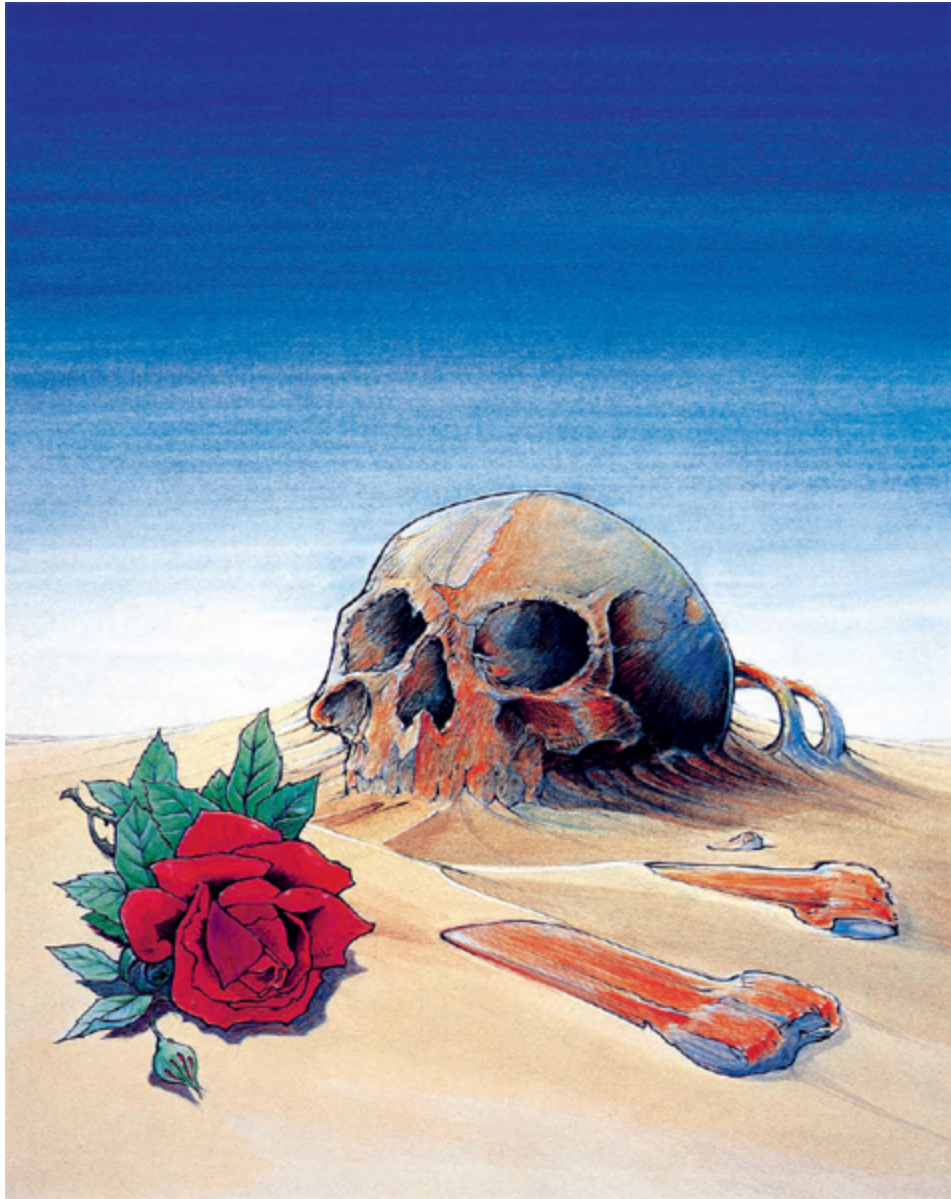
Neil Young's bus mural 1977
acrylic on canvas



Flying Eye 1974
airbrush Mouse/Kelley



Grateful Dead/Cyclops—Terrapin Station album art (back) 1977
acrylic on board Mouse/Kelley



Europe '81 1981
airbrush



Power of Soul 1970

final Jimi Hendrix album (unreleased) airbrush on board Mouse/Kelley



Jerry Garcia/Cats Under The Stars 1978
airbrush and acrylic on board



Led Zeppelin/Blue Angel 1978
airbrush on board



Journey/Captured album art 1980
airbrush and acrylic on board



Journey/Escape album art 1980
airbrush on board



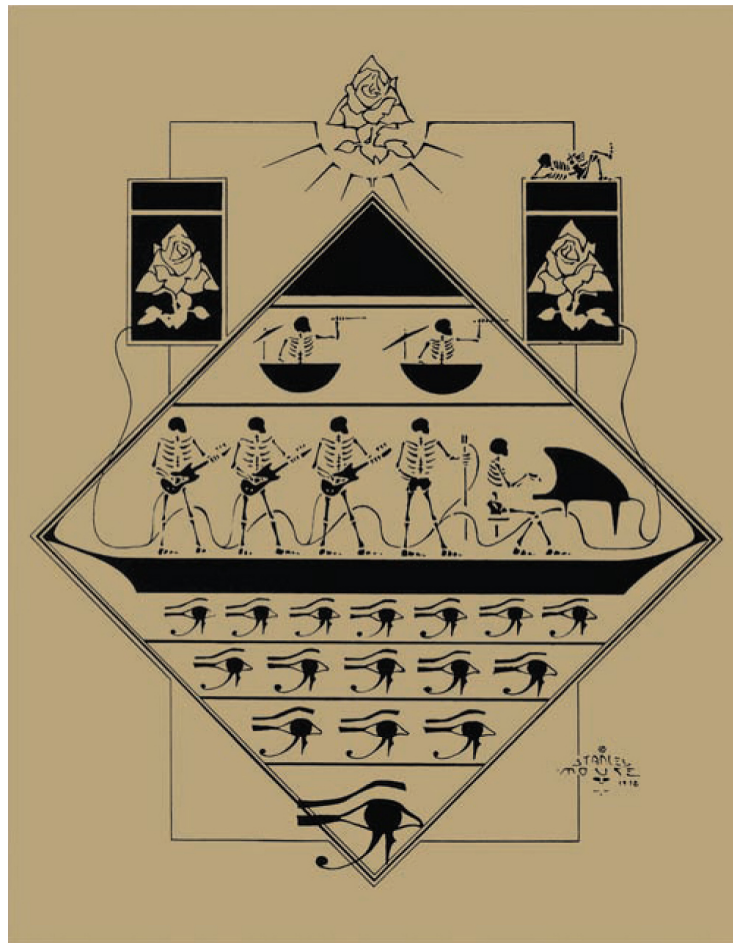
The Best of Journey album art 1981
airbrush on board



Marli's Angel 1978
airbrush



Journey/Robot 1983
airbrush



Egypt Gold 1978
ink on illustration board



Dead Family 1980
collage and acrylic on board



Timeless 1981
mixed media



Steppenwolf album art 1987
airbrush



Starship 1990
acrylic on board



Picassolisa 1990s
oil on canvas



Monster Munch 1969
acrylic on canvas



Need a New Brain 1993
oil on canvas



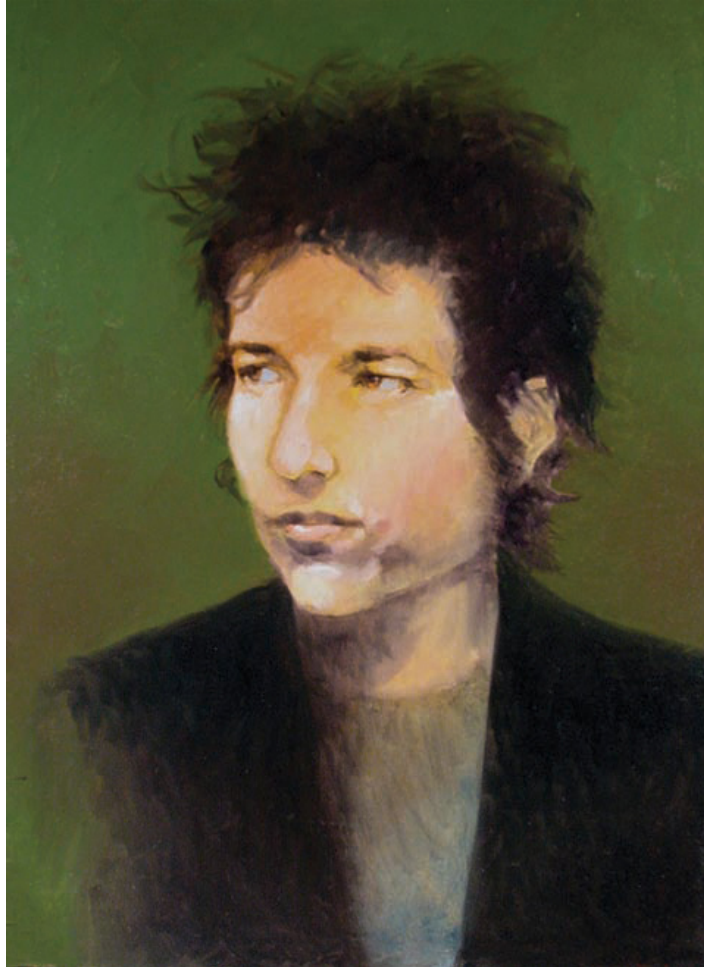
Built to Last 1998
oil on canvas



Hendrix Dragon 1995
mixed media



White Strat 1990s
oil on canvas



Young Dylan 1990s
oil on canvas



White Rabbit 2014
oil on canvas



Keeper of the Key—The David Nelson Band 1997
acrylic



Sun Lion late 1990s
egg tempera



Skull Mandala late 1990s
oil on canvas



One More Saturday Night 1992
airbrush



Rose Photographer 1988
gouache on illustration board



Bob Marley 1992
oil on canvas



Hendrix Guitar 1987
acrylic on canvas Stanley Mouse / Rick Griffin

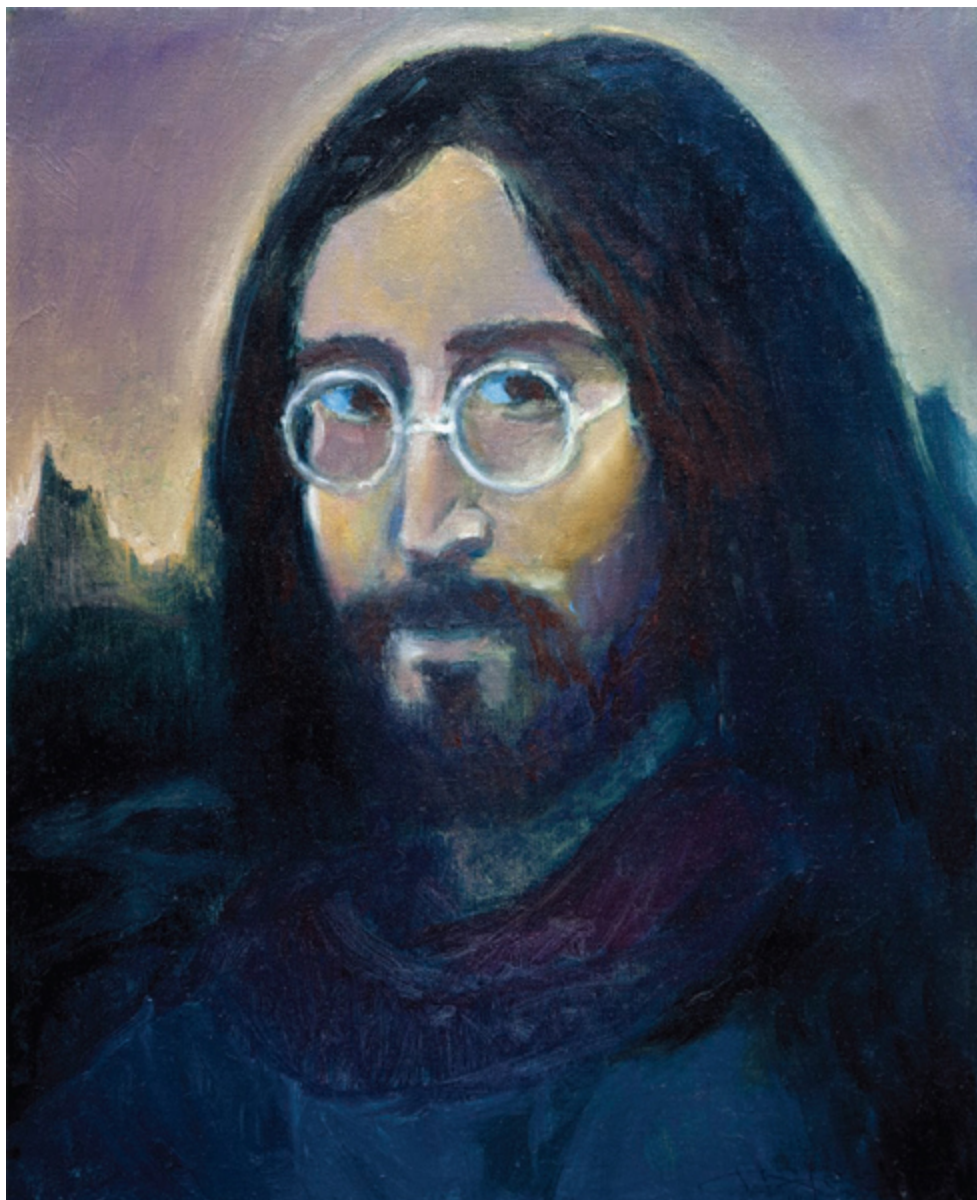


All You Need 1980

pencil / digital Created the night John died from a newspaper photo



Beatles on Bikes 1990s
pen and ink



Johna Lisa 2011
oil on canvas



Janis 2013
oil on canvas



Heaven's Gate 2012
oil on canvas



Church of Jerry 2014
pen and ink



Jerry Forever 1990s–2014 oil on canvas / digital



Jerry Bones 2014
mixed media
Photo by Bob Marks



Doors Live at the Matrix album art 2008
mixed media



Ice Eagle 1990
airbrush



Rolling Stone ad for Motorola 2007
oil on canvas



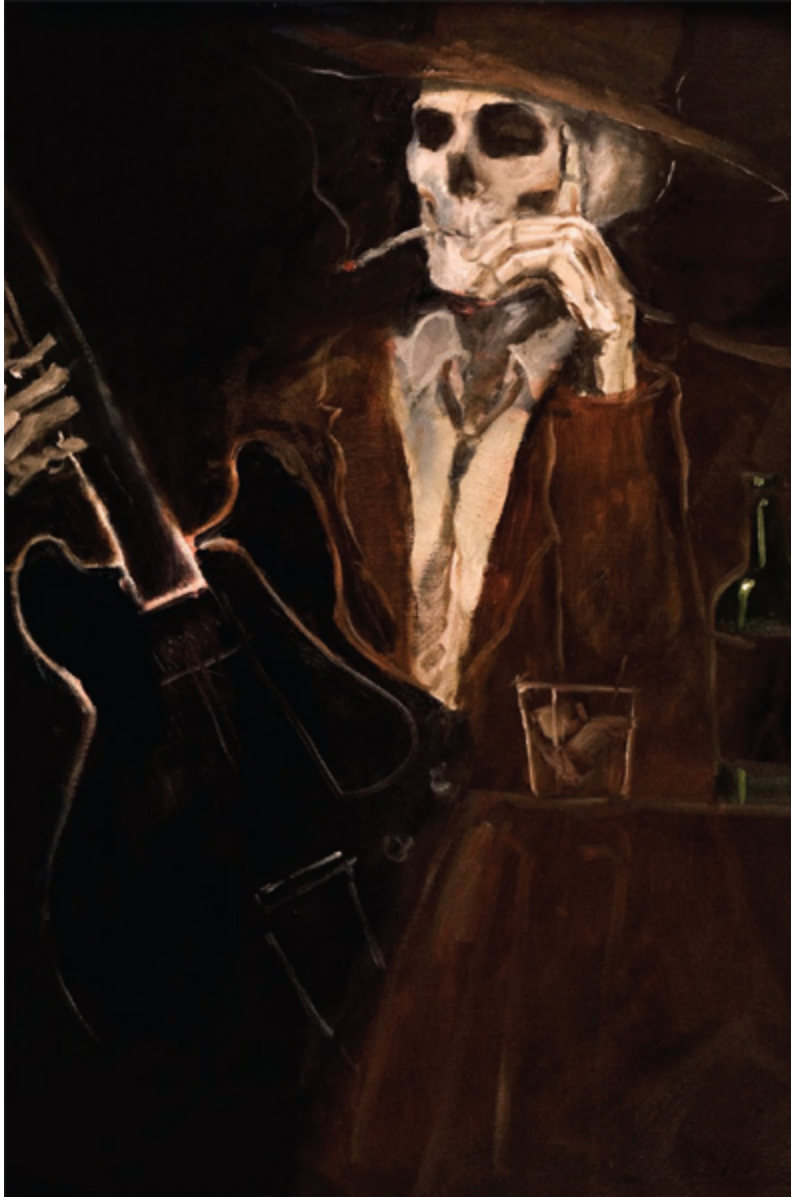
Hurricane Sandy 2012
oil on canvas



Searching for Jerry early 2000s
oil on canvas



Writing Music 2010
pen and ink / digital



Whiskey and Cigarettes 2010
oil on canvas



Boss Man 2010
oil on canvas



Devil and Angel 2013
oil on canvas



Dobro 2013
oil on canvas



Moon Dragon (for Moonalice) 2014
acrylic on board



Dragon guitar (for Roger McNamee) 2014
acrylic on guitar



Emerald Bay 1986
watercolor



Cherry Blossoms 2010
oil on canvas

LANDSCAPES AND FIGURATIVE PAINTING

Mouse claims that going to art school as a teenager was “useless; I didn’t learn anything but life drawing. I learned more out of books than I learned in art school.” How about art history? “All I remember is flying buttresses. One good thing, though, is my art school was connected to the Detroit Institute of the Arts, which was a really good art museum. They had these fantastic Diego Rivera murals on the walls there, of people working in the Detroit factories, and that made a big impression on me.”

Indeed, there were many artists who caught his eye and informed and influenced his development. Even during his hot rod/monster period, “When I used to paint T-shirts, I always carried a Salvador Dali book and a Heinrich Kley book. That Kley book was like my bible. He was an industrial artist in Germany [1863-1945] who he did these really great pen-and-ink drawings of elephants and alligators and big-boobed women—some really far-out stuff in a really tasty style. I think he eventually went mad. I used draw out of these books and imitate his line work. I didn’t copy them, but I did try to mimic the way he drew.” (It’s interesting to note that Walt Disney—former employer of Mouse’s dad—was a Kley collector and is said to have been influenced by him to create the hippo-and-crocodile ballet sequence in *Fantasia*.)

It wasn’t until 1966-67, when Mouse and Kelley spent days on end buried in art books at the local library, that Mouse turned on to the flowing, organic look of art nouveau—Mucha, Beardsley, et al.—particularly its

ornamental/decorative aspects, which influenced the lettering, borders, and overall design of a number of posters they made during that era. It is perhaps surprising, then, that Mouse's interest in and affection for art nouveau did not inspire him to create his own original drawings of long-tressed beauties for his ballroom posters; rather, he and Kelley "adapted" images from actual art nouveau period works.



Artist and Model 2013

Mouse's serious figurative work began when he moved to Santa Fe in the early 1980s and re-dedicated himself to figure drawing and also started to work in oils. "I was doing a lot of life classes and also painting landscapes outdoors. I like to work fairly quickly. It's called *alla prima*, or 'all at once,' so I try to do it all in one setting; that's how I do most things. With landscapes, you're trying to get the light, and with models, they're

there for three hours usually, so it's kind of trial by fire if you want to finish it.

"I remember I went to Italy and my friend, Maureen Hyde, who taught at an art school there let me come into her groups. They'd have a model come in and get in the same pose for like six weeks. It was excruciating. What can you do in six weeks? You kill a painting, that's what you do; you paint the life out of it." Another key influence was painter and instructor Randall Stauss, who Stanley met at Lake Tahoe in the early 1980s.

So what's his technique for his "alla prima" works? "I sketch with the brush, which is something I tried to do for many years, but I finally accomplished it. I used to do a charcoal under-drawing; now I just paint. You leave out some of the basic steps and just do it, rather than laboring over each step. It's something you develop by doing it a million times. Now I put my brush up to the canvas and it just *happens*—the picture starts appearing in front of me. That's from doing it over and over and over again. But it's taken a long time to get to that point."



Sketching 2014
Sebastopol, CA

Considering the tremendous variety of his “popular” work in the rock ‘n’ roll world through the years, it seems only natural that his landscape and figurative pieces cannot be easily lumped together or conveniently characterized. Certainly there are paintings that hearken back—most likely by coincidence—to works by giants of the Bay Area Figurative Movement of ‘50s and ‘60s, such as David Park, Richard Diebenkorn, and Elmer Bischoff . . . Or is he actually drawing from much further back—the impressionists and post-impressionists? Cezanne? Blue-period Picasso? How about Thomas Hart Benton and Georgia O’Keefe? All of the above? None of the above?

There is a strong Native American influence—in both style and subject matter—in some of his works from Santa Fe and later: vivid scenes, dreamscapes, and stories that seem like they’re from a parallel world (perhaps they are). It almost doesn’t feel like the same artist who has

conjured so many earthy and sensual women in his recent paintings. But that's Mouse. Creatively, he's always been a shapeshifter, comfortable moving in many different artistic directions, yet never straying too far from his soul.



Swans 1984
oil on canvas



Clouds 1999
oil on canvas



Keeping Warm 1991
watercolor



Blue Shadow 1998
oil on canvas



Starry Night 1998
oil on canvas



Tangled Up in Blue 1999
oil on canvas



Sleepy 2010
oil on canvas



Red Flower 2014
oil on canvas



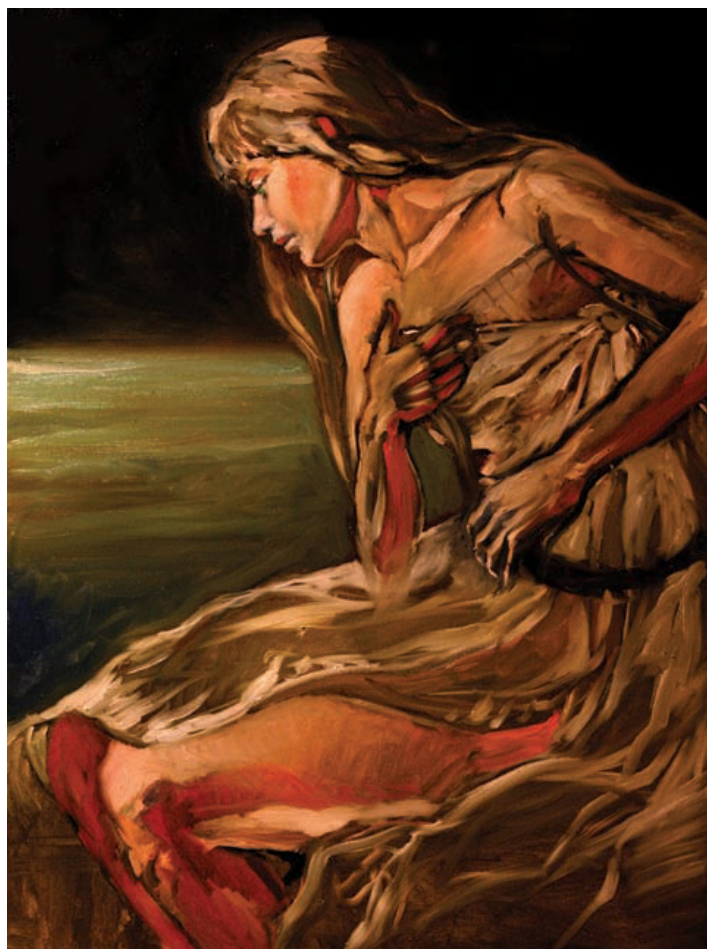
Lucid Dreams 2011
oil on canvas



Light of the Soul 2013
oil on canvas



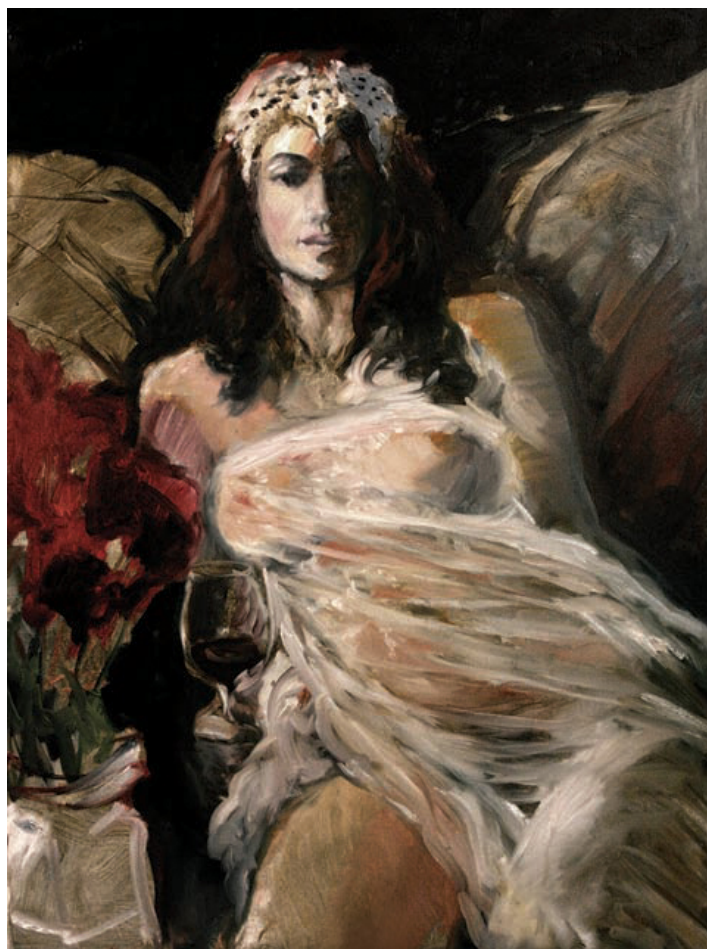
Creme Brulee 2014
oil on canvas



Eternal Now 2010
oil on canvas



The Card 2010
oil on canvas



Lyrical 2013
oil on canvas



Peacock Feather 2013
oil on canvas



The Lantern 2010
oil on canvas



Tattoo 2010
oil on canvas



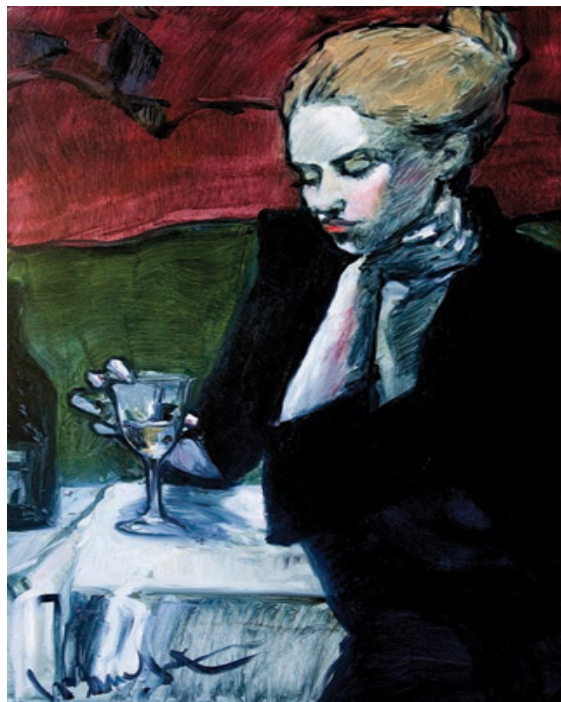
Sweet Dreams 2013
oil on canvas



Alchemy 2013
oil on canvas



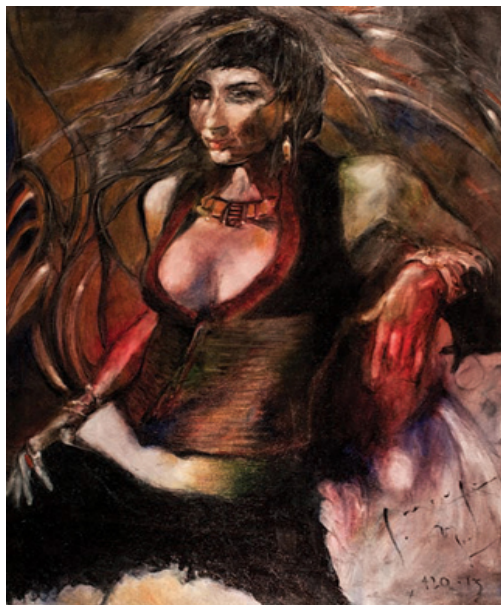
The Lute 2009
oil on canvas



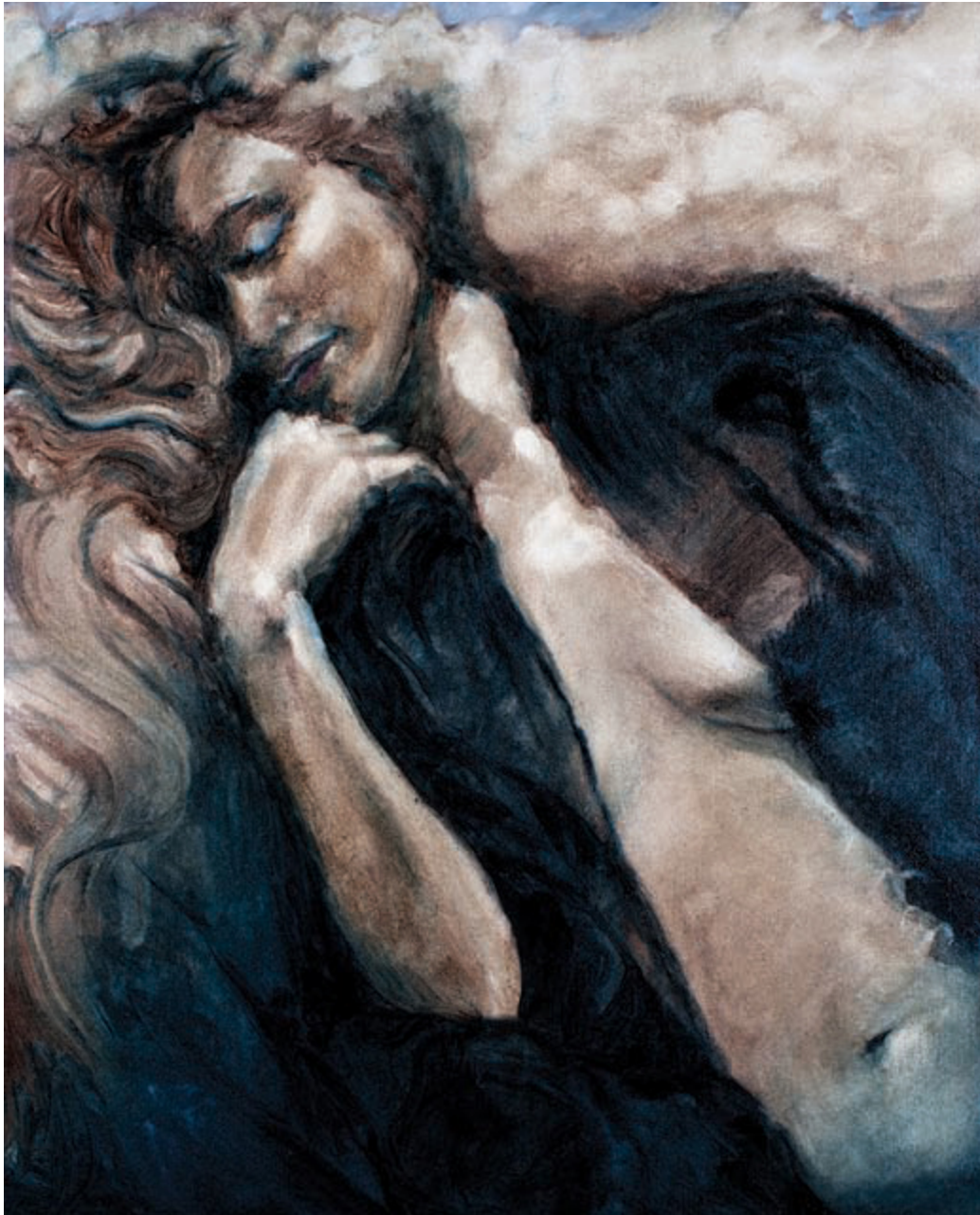
Left Bank 2013
oil on canvas



Don't Let Go 2010
oil on canvas



Bicycle Day 2013
oil on canvas



Head in the Clouds 2013
oil on canvas



Red Velvet 2008
oil on canvas



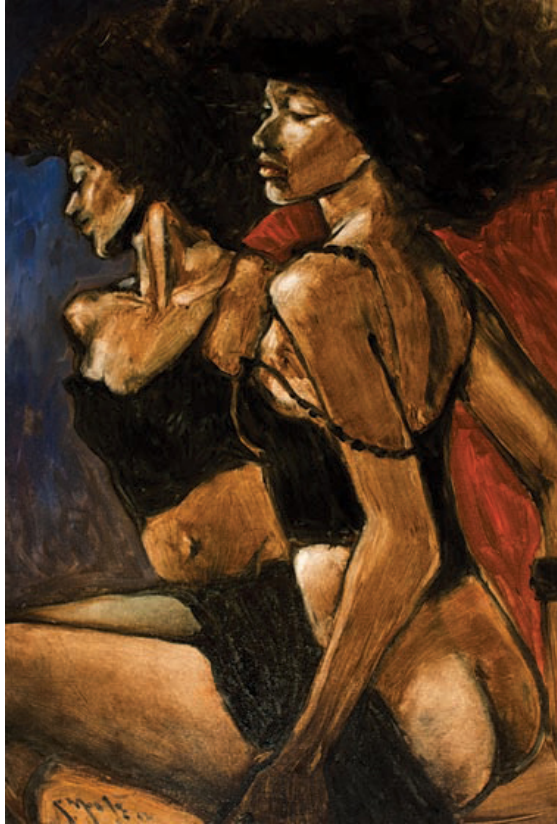
Marionette 2013
oil on canvas



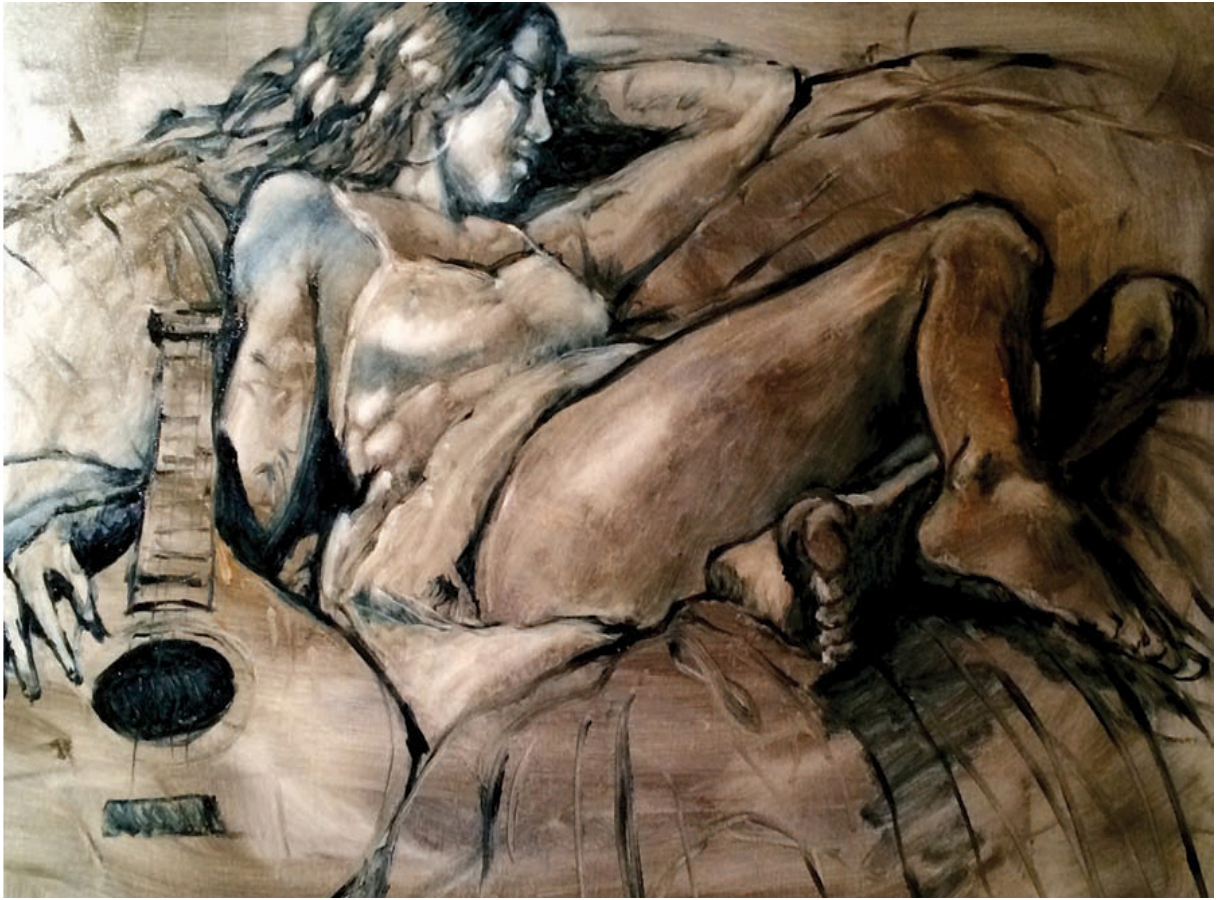
Little Spirit 2014
oil on canvas



Red Eye 2014
oil on board



Gemini 2013
oil on canvas



Serene 2014
oil on canvas



Heart on Fire 2014
oil on canvas



Deep Space 2008
oil on canvas



Golden Flower 2011
oil on canvas



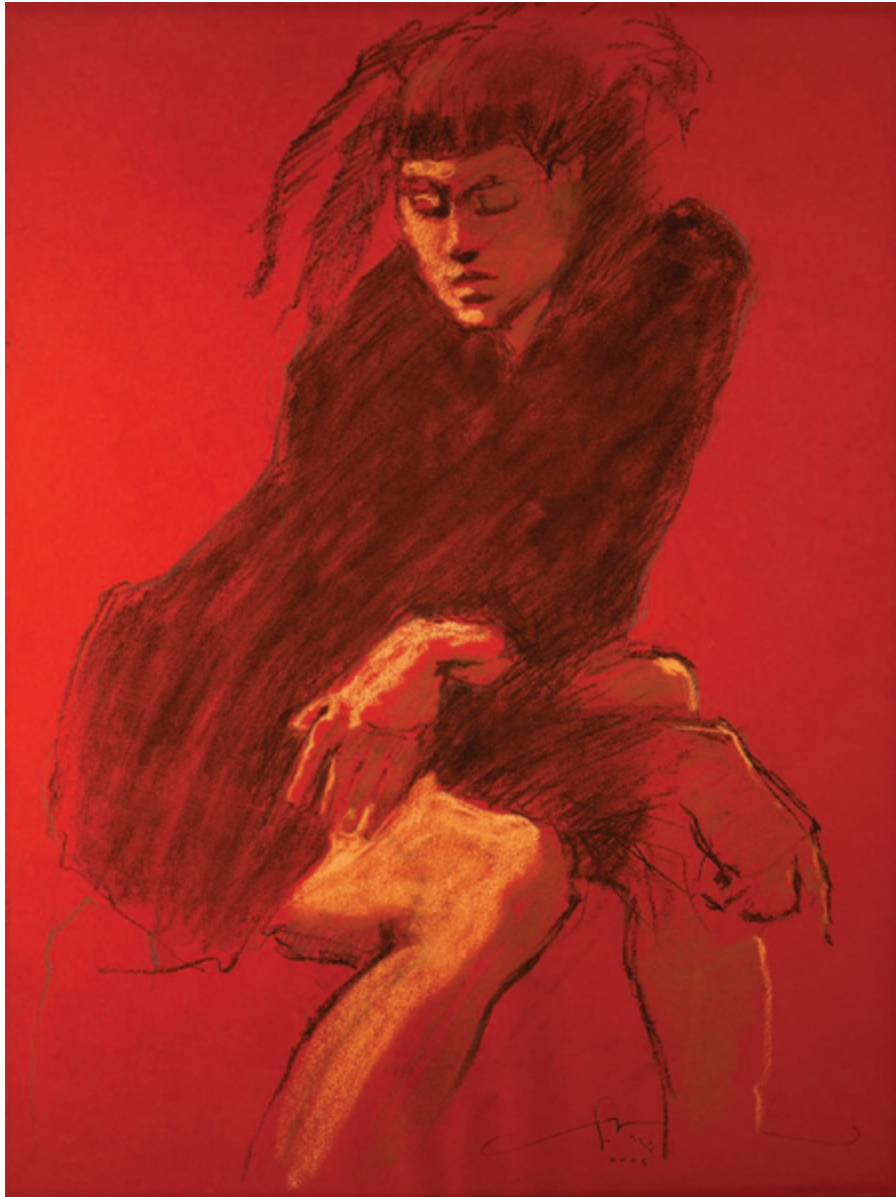
Bloomers 2013
oil on canvas



Prom Night 1987
oil on canvas



Daydreams 2009
chalk on paper



Hands 2012
chalk on paper



Mountain Girl 1987
oil on canvas



Desert Sea 1989
oil on canvas



Red Roof 1990
oil on canvas



Bodega Head 1994
oil on canvas



Moon and Vineyards 1995
oil on canvas



Pink Sky 1998
oil on canvas



Street Café 1997
oil on canvas



Glory of Summer 1997
oil on canvas



Mustard Flowers 1997
oil on canvas



Golden Flower 2009
oil on canvas



The Knitter 2010
oil on canvas



Easy Rider 2010
oil on canvas

EASY RIDER

“I’m always sketching; I always have my drawing pad with me,” Stanley Mouse says. He speaks the truth. “I’ll go to a concert, or anywhere, and I’ll sit there and draw, and things will come out, and if it’s something that’s kind of remarkable, maybe I’ll work on it and develop it more.” And if the sketchbook isn’t handy for some reason, say at restaurant where the tables are covered with white paper, you can bet that by the end of dessert, Mouse’s side of the table is going to be covered with all sorts of fanciful ink musings — one hates to use the term “doodles” for something a real artist creates even under such casual circumstances. Now try to imagine a lifetime spent sketching and drawing and letting his infinitely fertile mind roam free with pen on paper. He’s saved virtually every dog-eared pad, from his teen years to the present day, and perhaps someday we’ll be lucky enough to peer into them, mouths agape at the weirdness and wonder of it all.

THE BIG
IDEA...



THE NOTHINGNESS
THAT SAVED
THE EVERYTHING



Art Is Dead 1990s
acrylic on board



Beauty and the Beast 2010
oil on canvas



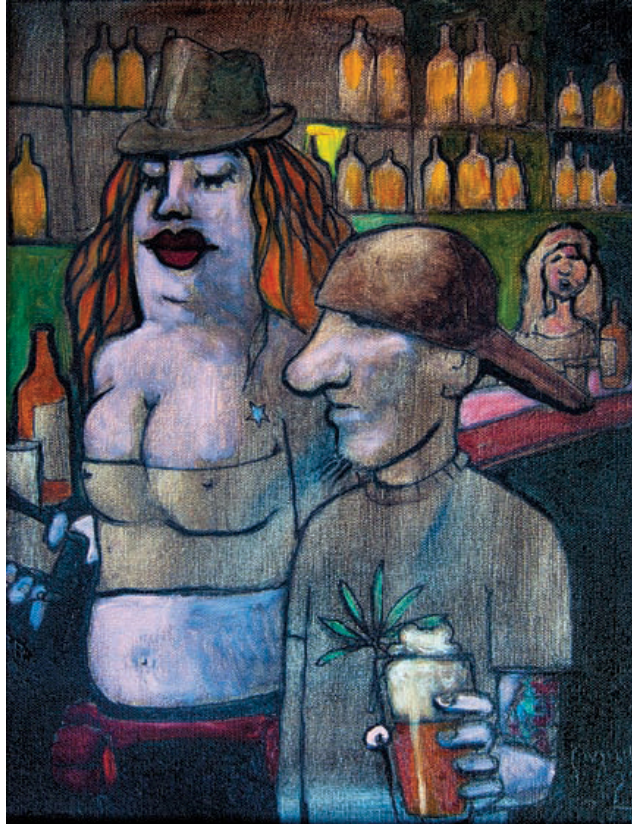
Barfly 2012
acrylic on canvas



Rat Dog 2013
acrylic / airbrush on canvas



Bar Scene 2013
oil on canvas



Bluesy Tuesday 2013
oil on canvas



Butterfly Fairy 1990
mixed media



Eleven 2012
oil on canvas



Freaked Out Kitty 2011
oil on canvas



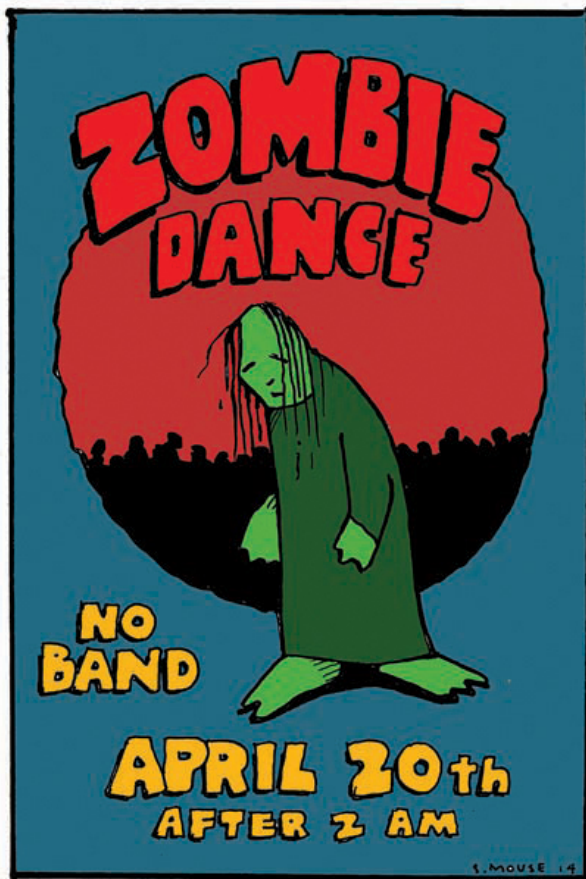
Turbo 2013
acrylic on canvas



Secret Colors 2013
oil on canvas



Burning Woman 2014
oil on canvas



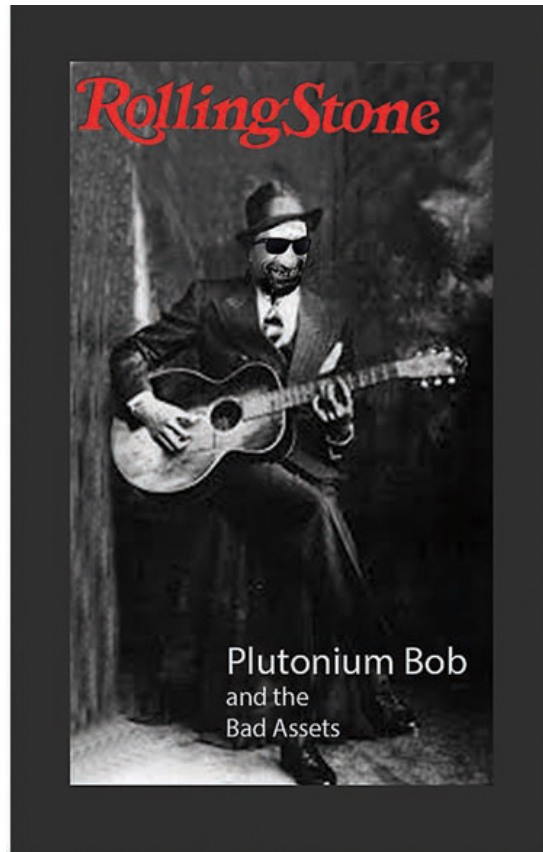
Zombie Dance 2014
acrylic on board



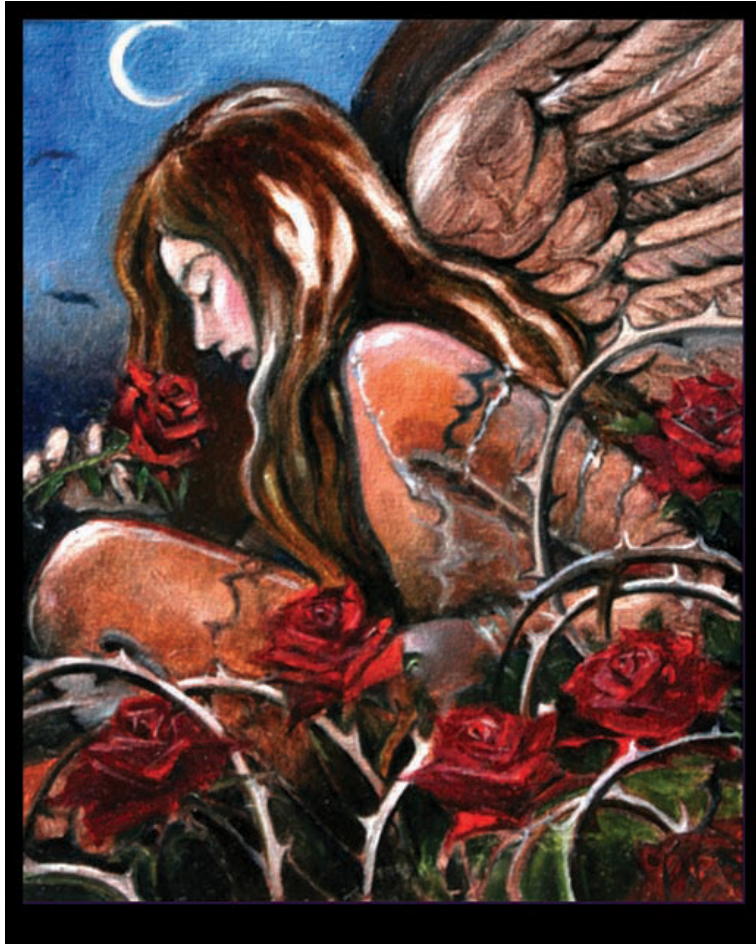
Rockin' Out 2014
pen and ink



Fuck lettering 1966
pen and ink



Plutonium Bob (concept) 2014
digital



Briar Rose 2010
oil on canvas



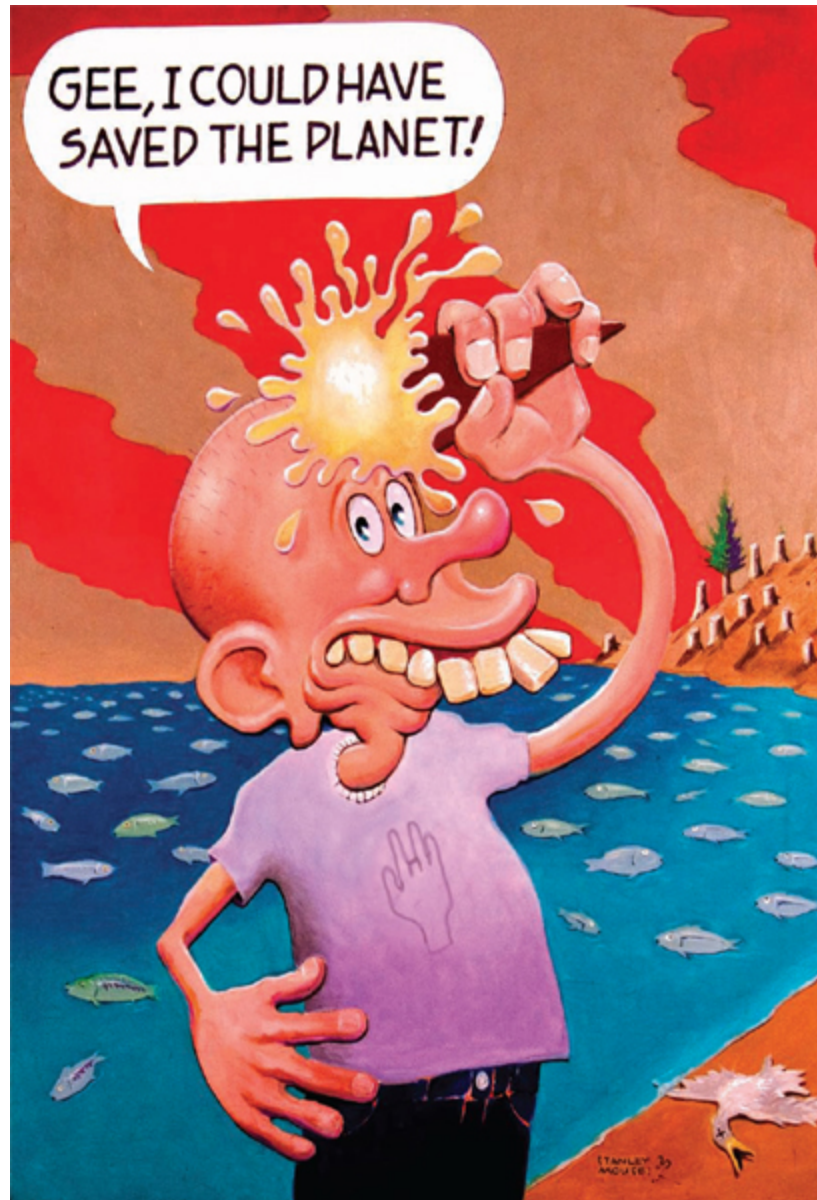
The Clown 2010
oil on canvas



Story 2004
oil on canvas



Peace Pipe 1990s
oil on canvas



Gee late 1990s
acrylic on board



Hearts 2014
oil on canvas



this book is dedicated to everyone that i love, and to all my friends on the moon.



Spiral Space early 2000s
digital